

# Social networking for lizards – when neighbours don't become good friends

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New research from Murdoch University has revealed that lizards avoid each other in their own neighbourhood, and most of all steer clear of their relatives.

The conventional wisdom is that [family relationships](#) form an important part of social interactions – in both humans, and many other animal

societies – as many benefits are gained by aiding family first.

"We found that bobtail [lizards](#) of the opposite sex spent less time together if they were more related to each other," explains Stephanie Godfrey. "This has obvious implications for avoiding incest."

Stephanie used small GPS loggers to trace their interactions, registering who interacted with whom – like Facebook for lizards – and then collected DNA samples from the lizards to work out who was related to whom.

Males avoiding their brothers, could actually be an act of brotherly love, as most male-male interactions in these lizards are of an aggressive nature.

But how do lizards know who they should associate with? Stephanie says that lizards have well developed olfactory systems, so it is possible they can 'sniff out' their relatives, and know who to avoid just by scent.

"Family is still important, but not in the way we normally think about it," says Stephanie. "Lizards may benefit from family relationships by avoiding their relatives – to avoid mating and costly fighting with [relatives](#)."



Bobtail lizards (*Tiliqua rugosa*) avoid their relatives

Provided by FreshScience

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