

Preference Tests

How can you tell what animals like if they can't talk?

Scientists have asked this same question. One way we can tell what animals like is by watching their behavior. Scientists call watching behavior *making observations*. Another way we can tell what animals like is by setting up a test or an *experiment* to see what animals choose or what they *prefer*. Scientists call these experiments "Preference Tests."

Preference Tests can help scientists and farmers know how hens would prefer to be housed or what kind of environments they like. For example, scientists have used Preference Tests to find out what kind of floors hens prefer. The scientists measured how much time hens spent on each type of floor. The floor that hens stood on the longest was the floor the hens liked better.

Scientists have also set up tests to see if hens prefer being in a cage or in an outside run. For this test, each hen was given a choice to either go into a cage or go into an outside run. After the hen made her choice, the door was closed. The hens spent five minutes in each place. The hens were tested over and over again to see how often they made the same choice. Most hens chose to go into the outside run, even when scientists put food in the cage. The observations scientists make in Preference Tests are called *results*. Based on the results of the scientists' test, which do you think hens like better, cages or outside runs?



Design Your Own Preference Test

Using what you know about Preference Tests, design your own “Preference Test” for one of animals you’ve learned about so far in the RedRover Readers program. For example, how would you set up an experiment to test whether a dog preferred sleeping on the floor versus sleeping on a dog bed?

Animal: _____

Question: Which does the animal like better, _____ or _____?

What will I measure? (Number of times the animal chooses something or amount of time spent with the choices?) _____

How many times would I measure this and why? _____

Describe your preference test: _____

What is your hypothesis? (What do you *think* will be the result of your test or the answer to your question? What do you think the animal will like better?)
