

NEWS

Video: Strange mice behaving strangely

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Many researchers look at mouse social behavior, but few look as closely as Caroline Blanchard, professor of genetics and molecular biology, who works with her husband Robert Blanchard at John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

"We've been married for 50 years and have been studying mice for nearly as long," says Blanchard. But about five years ago, "[we were] told to do something useful for a change," she jokes.

'Something useful' is studying social behavior, which the Blanchards attacked with vigor, using an army of undergraduates to watch eight hours of video each day, for four days, for each experiment. These undergraduates, and a few select graduate students, manually score all the intricacies of behavior as mice interact in a naturalistic cage that mimics a burrow in the wild.

One of the Blanchards' favorite models is the BTBR mouse, an inbred strain that shows many behaviors reminiscent of people with autism.

At the **2011 Society for Neuroscience annual meeting** in Washington, D.C., Blanchard gave SFARI.org a picture of some of BTBR's unusual behaviors, such as their grooming patterns, and how they compare with B6 mice, a typically social mouse strain.

For more reports from the 2011 Society for Neuroscience annual meeting, please [click here](#).