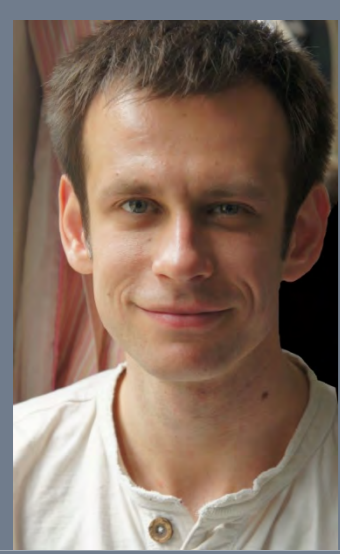


THE INFLUENCE OF THE NOVELTY QUANTITY ON THE INTENSITY OF THE EXPLORATORY BEHAVIOR

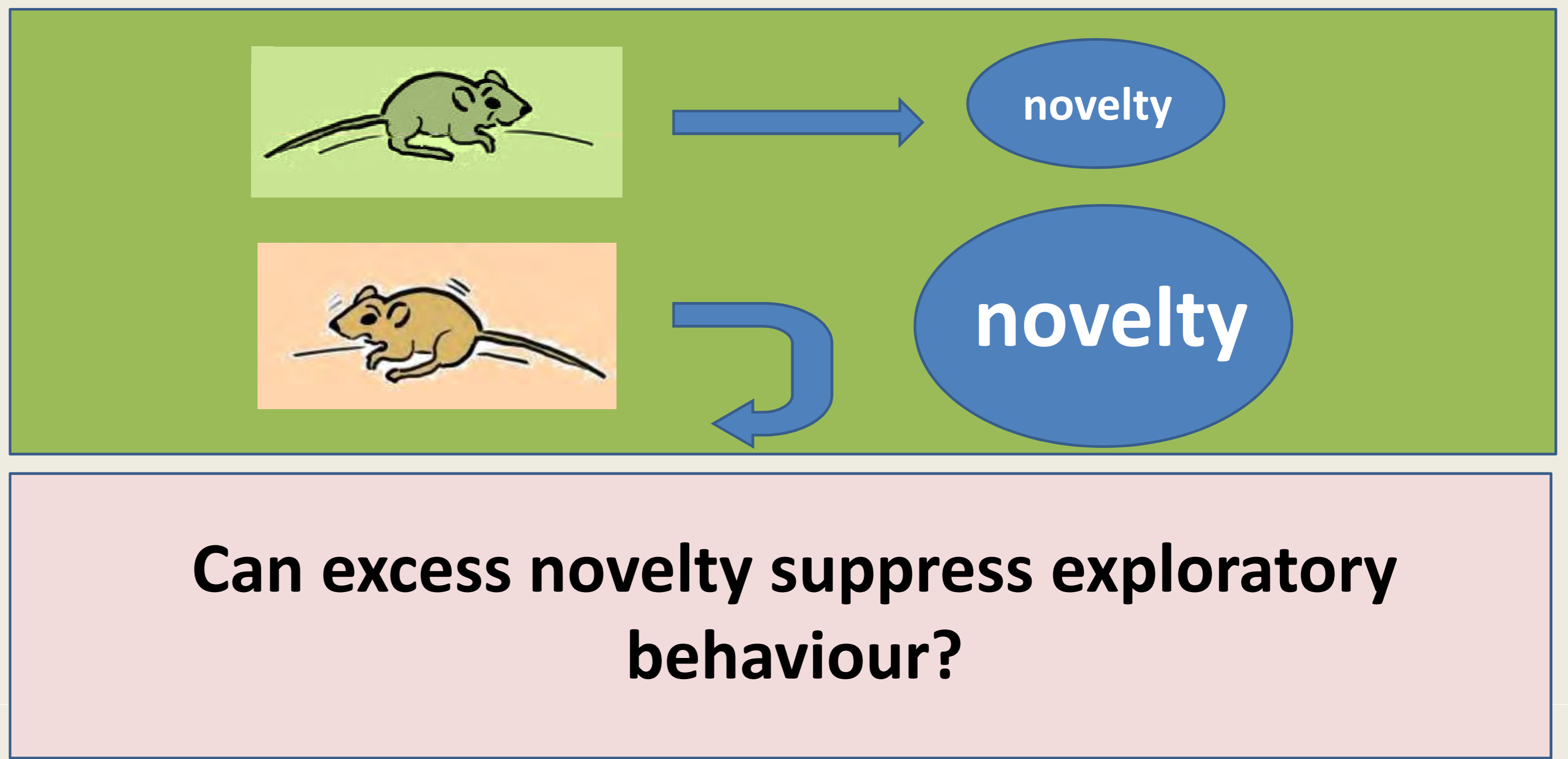


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- Exploratory behaviour is a good indicator of welfare
- Exploratory behaviour is the natural response to novelty
- Novelty represents a stressor
- High level of stress is depressing the exploratory behaviour



Materials and methods



Maintenance routine

Environmental enrichment

Subjects: Mid-day gerbils *Meriones meridianus*

Experimental design

HIGH LEVEL OF NOVELTY (HN)
Daily and unpredictable changes in maintenance routine: feeding, cleaning, relocation of shelters, flashes of light (n = 8)



LOW LEVEL OF NOVELTY
Absence of unpredictable changes (n = 8)



After four days of keeping under certain conditions, the exploratory behaviour to a new object has been compared between the two test groups (8 individuals in per group), one kept under high novelty, second one kept under low novelty.

Then keeping conditions for each group were changed to alternative and tests were run again.

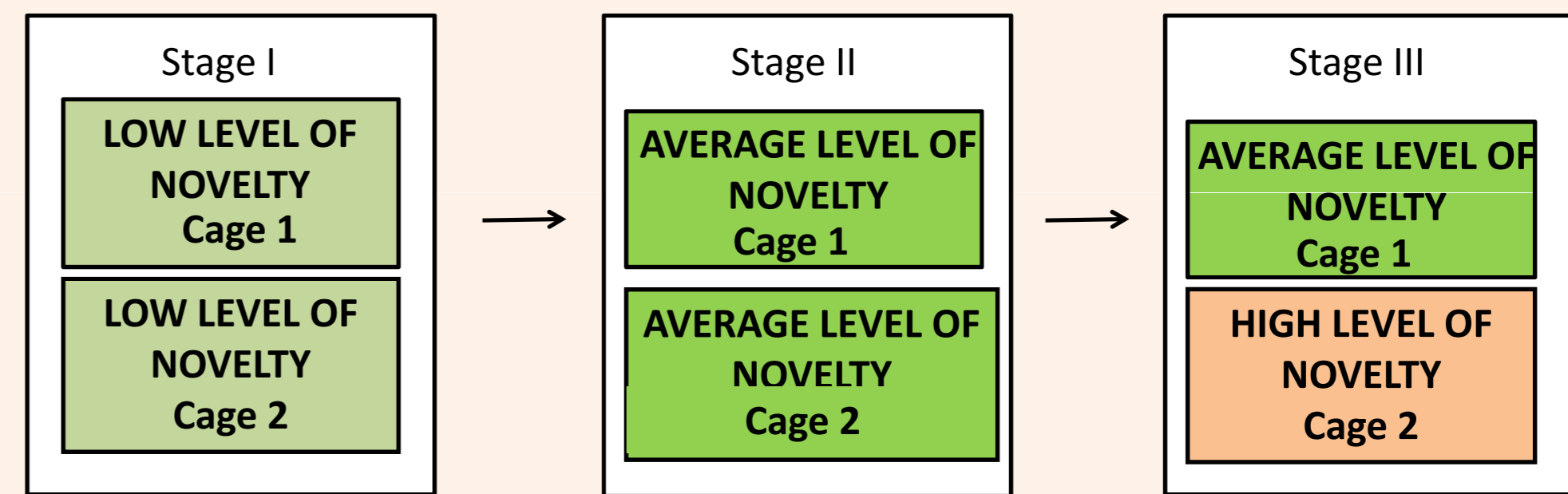
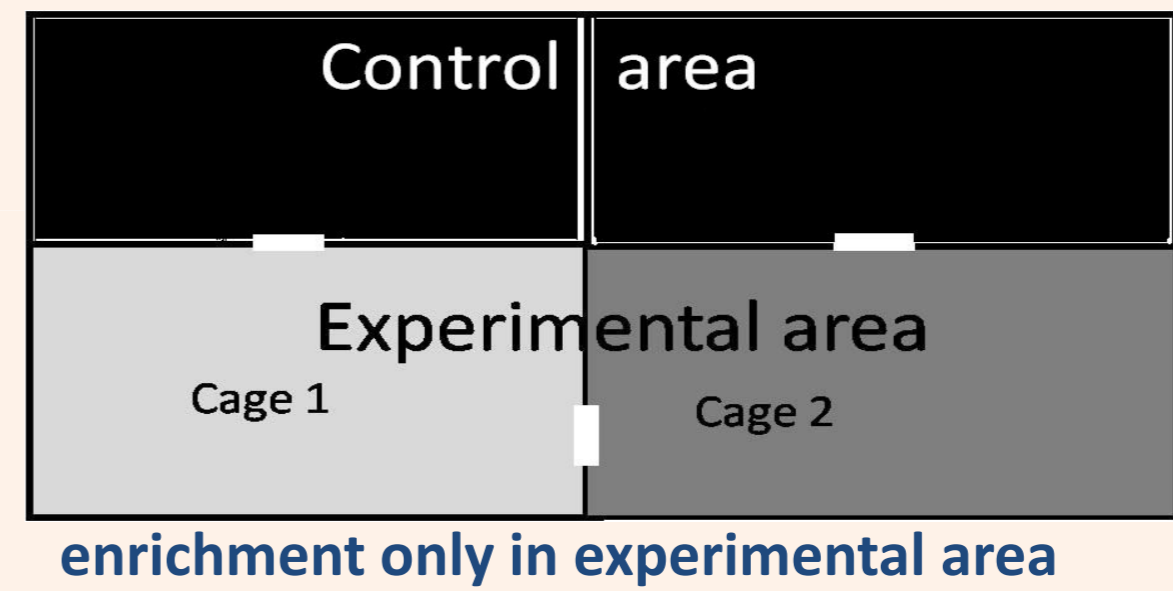
We recorded the latency to first physical contact with a novel object and the duration of manipulation with the object.

Subject: one male Pallas' cat *Otocolobus manul*

Experimental design



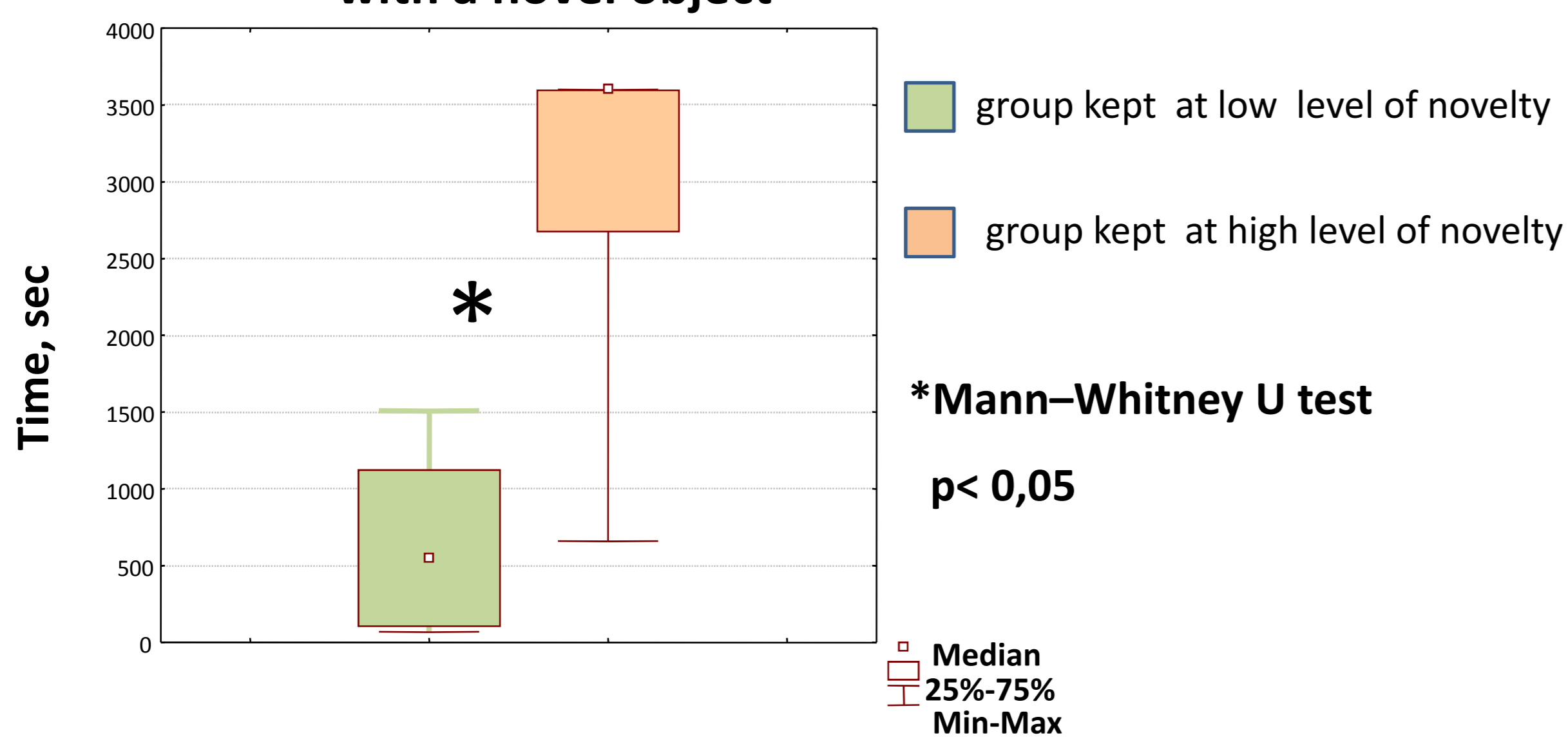
Scheme of an experimental setting



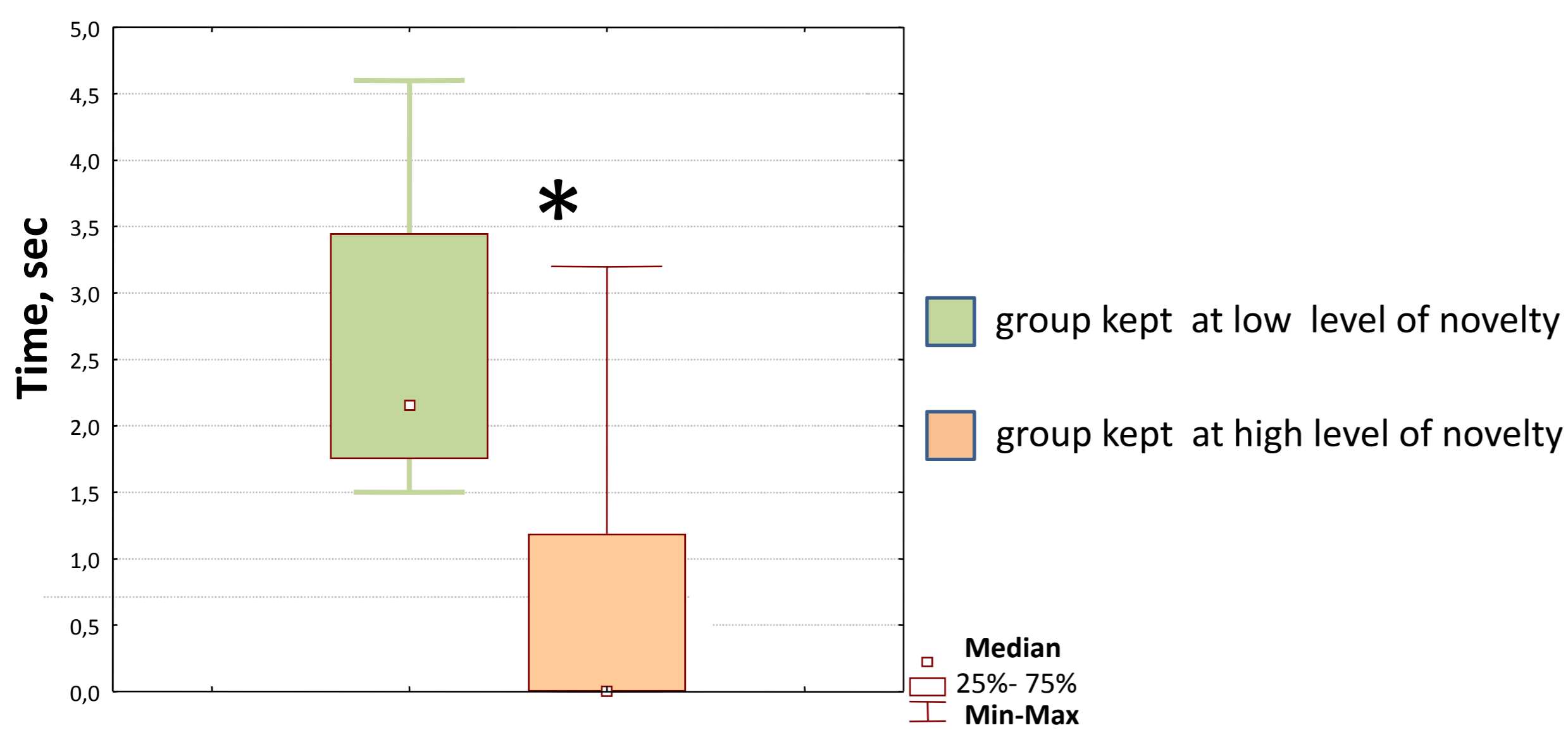
Complex of environmental enrichment: alimentary, tactile, sensory. 52 hours of observations were recorded. Instantaneous scan sampling was used to record the animal exploratory behaviour and the use of experimental vs control area.

Results

Latency to first physical contact with a novel object

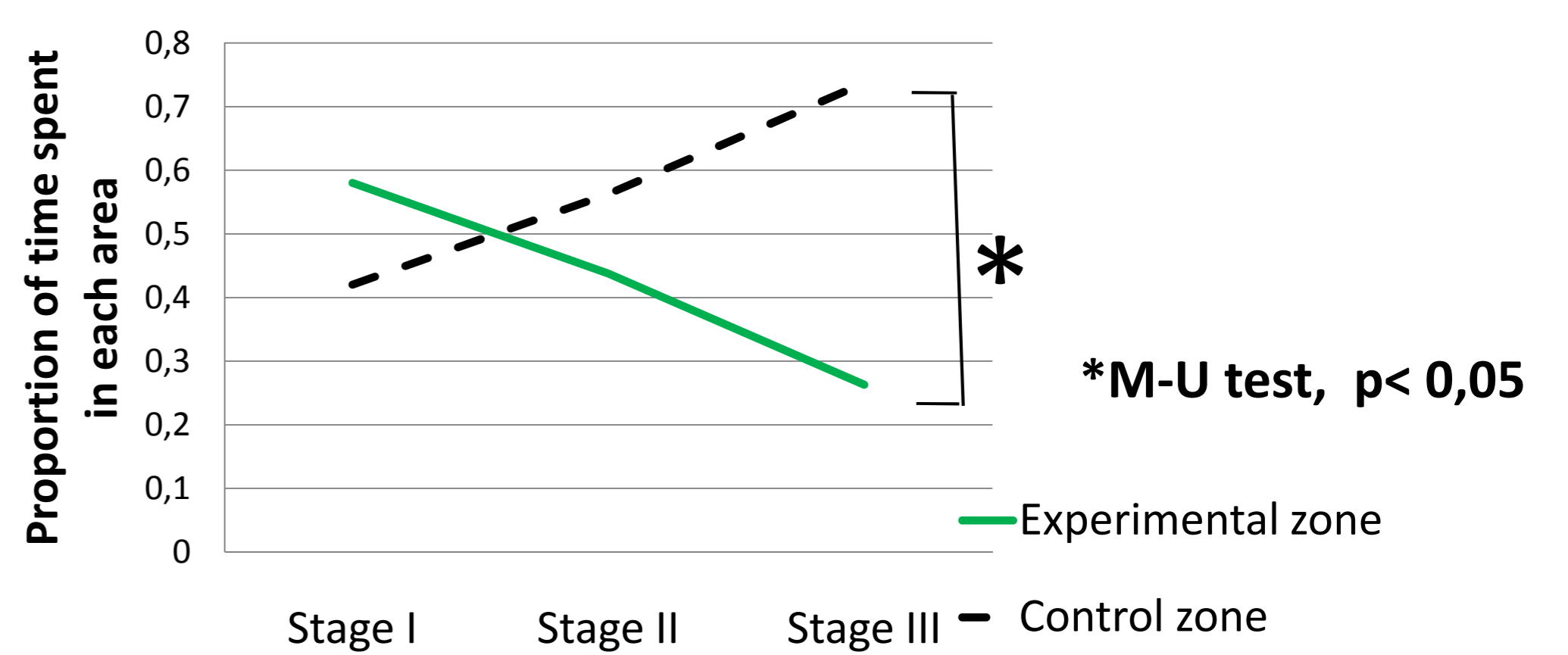


Duration of manipulation with a new object

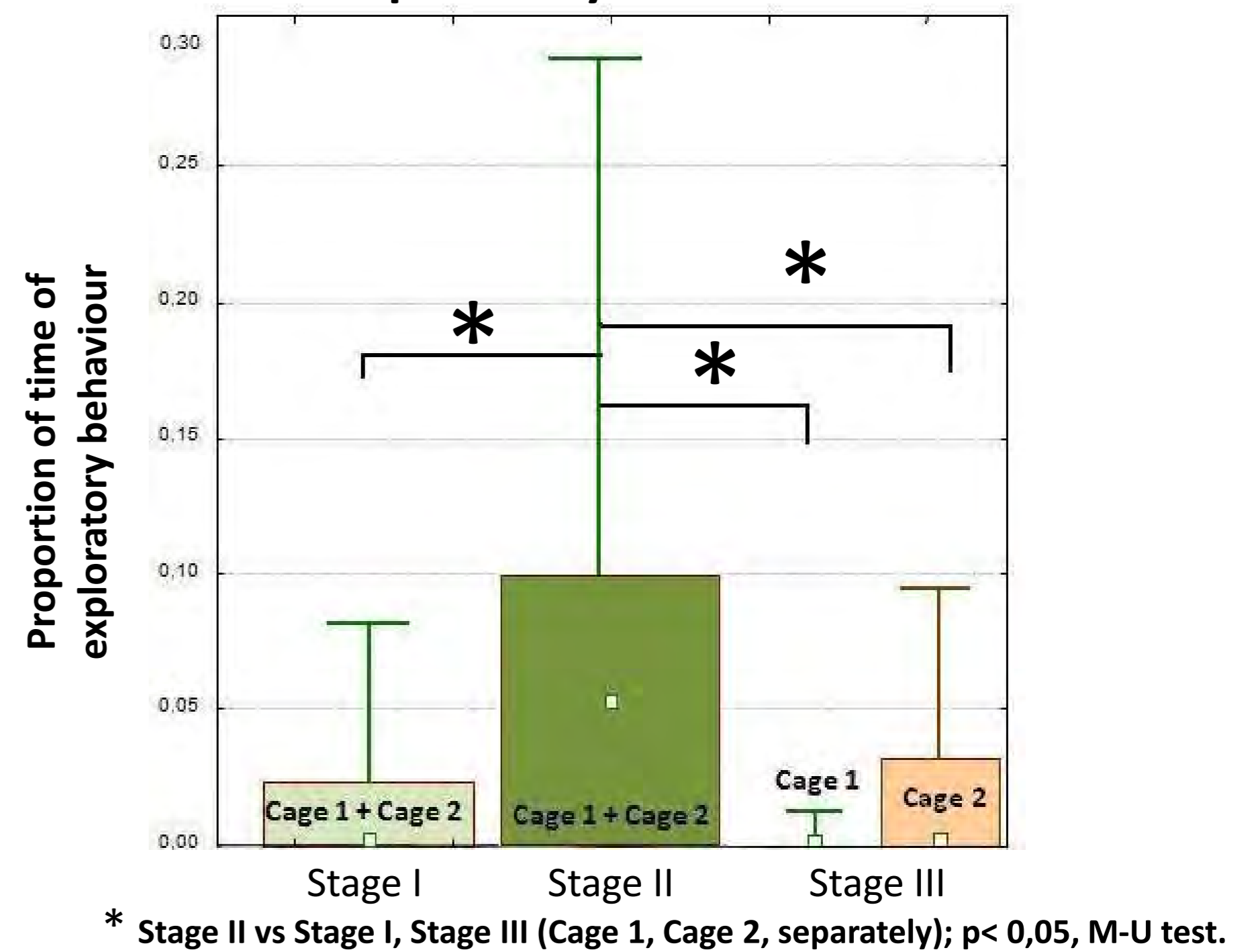


Group kept at high novelty had higher latency and lower time of manipulating with a new object.

Use of experimental vs control area



Exploratory behaviour



Providing enrichment to the male Pallas' cat initially led to increase the exploratory activity, but subsequent increase the intensity of novelty led to decrease of intensity of exploratory behaviour and avoiding the enrichment area.

Conclusion:

High level of novelty suppresses the exploratory behaviour and probably reduces animal welfare.