

ACTIVITY 1: IMPACT OF OVERCROWDING

When a species loses its natural space, how does it affect the individual? Primates from humans to aye-ayes are feeling the pinch of overcrowding. Yet while humans sometimes elect to live in a crowded situation, animals suffering from habitat loss or other events do not usually choose to be placed in that environment. This game demonstrates what happens as a population loses its space. To play, you need a 100-foot-long rope and an open space. Any number of people can play.

PROCEDURE

1. Make a circle on the ground with the rope.
2. With your classmates, pretend you are rhesus macaques (or rabbits or another animal).
3. Stand inside the rope circle. This is the total area you have for your living space. You cannot live outside of the rope.
4. One at a time, your teacher or a designated class leader will announce an event that impacts the living space (events are listed below). With each event, you should make the rope circle half the size that it was.
5. Allow a minute to get used to your new living situation, as the area shrinks each time.
6. Depending on the number of players, you may not be able to introduce all five changes before the monkeys run out of room and begin to fall out of the circle.
7. As soon as monkeys start to fall out of the circle, stop the activity and discuss what happened.

EVENTS

- Fire destroys half of the living area.
- New houses are built, covering half of the living area.
- A heavy storm floods half of the living area.
- A new road is built that covers half of the living area.
- Forests are razed and removed from half of the living area.

QUESTIONS

1. How did you feel as the space became more limited?
2. Do you think this happens in real life? Give an example.
3. What could be changed to make the outcome different?