

Start a family on the rat foot



FAMILY size could be determined by which hand you use to write. Scientists in America have found that right-handed rats who mate with left-handed females have more offspring than left-handed rats and right-handed females.

Humans appear to need to have one side of the brain dominant in order to function properly, so scientists are intensely interested in the implications of the rat's "split brain".

For rats, one should really say right-sided and left-sided rather than handed, since their orientation is deter-

mined by whether they turn in circles to the right or the left in their cages at night.

Ida Gerendai, a leading researcher in the field, has established a nerve connection between rats' sex organs, ovaries in females and testes in males, with the hypothalamus in the brain — which stimulates hormones.

But don't call it all off just because your beloved picks up his or her toast with the left hand — choice of a hand in humans does not indicate conclusively which side of the brain dominates.

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