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To fight or not to fight? Aggressive behaviour adjustment of territorial defence in mammals, with a focus on American mink.

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Understanding the spatial distribution and territorial behaviour of animals is essential for comprehending the complexities of animal social systems, and the evolutionary and environmental factors that shape them. Spatial division of individuals or groups of animals determines their access to critical resources, such as food, shelter, mates and breeding sites, and therefore plays an essential role for survival and reproduction. Thus, the defence of territories is widespread throughout the animal kingdom. As direct aggression in defending territories comes with a cost in terms of energy loss, as well as possible injury or death, it is pivotal not to fight unnecessarily. An intriguing behaviour, the “dear enemy effect”, where territory owners respond less aggressively towards known neighbours than strangers, has been described in numerous animal taxon. The extent of this behaviour in mammals has however not been systematically reviewed until now.

Here, we present the results of a literature review on the “dear enemy effect” in mammals, revealing the phenomenon in 34 species of 20 different families, and in 82% of studies where neighbour-stranger discrimination was confirmed, and explore what might influence the behaviour. In addition, we dive into data on the American mink (*Neogale vison*) in Iceland with respect to this behaviour and factors that might shape aggression response towards conspecifics in mink in Iceland.