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1 **A method for selective stimulation of leg chemoreceptors in whole crustaceans**

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4 **Running title:** Leg response in crustaceans

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18

19 **Keywords:** aquatic chemoreception, leg response, antennules, maxillipeds, behaviour

20

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22

23 **Summary statement:**

24 The presented technique opens possibilities for further studies on sensory-motor integration evoked by  
25 leg stimulation in whole aquatic animals under natural conditions to supplement, with a direct  
26 approach, current ablation/silencing techniques.

27 **Abstract**

28 The integration of sensory information with adequate motor outputs is critical for animal survival.  
29 Here, we present an innovative technique based on a non-invasive closed-circuit device consisting of a  
30 perfusion/stimulation chamber chronically applied on a single leg of the crayfish *Procambarus clarkii*.  
31 Using this technique, we focally stimulated the leg inside the chamber and studied the leg-dependent  
32 sensory-motor integration involving other sensory appendages, such as antennules and maxillipeds,  
33 which remain unstimulated outside the chamber.  
34 Results show that the stimulation of a single leg with chemicals, such as disaccharides, is sufficient to  
35 trigger a complex search behaviour involving locomotion coupled with the reflex activation of  
36 antennules and maxillipeds.  
37 This technique can be easily adapted to other decapods and/or other sensory appendages. Thus, it has  
38 opened possibilities for studying sensory-motor integration **evoked by leg stimulation** in whole aquatic  
39 animals under natural conditions to supplement, with a direct approach, current ablation/silencing  
40 techniques.

## 41 INTRODUCTION

42 The ability of animals to successfully cope with complex and dynamic habitats depends on their  
43 prompt production of adaptive responses that integrate sensory information with adequate motor  
44 outputs as they search for suitable resources and avoid potentially dangerous contexts (Proekt et al.,  
45 2008; Hoke et al., 2017; Chen and Hong, 2018). In this regard, motor control is closely linked to two  
46 sensory modalities, namely, chemo- and mechanoreception and chemo/hydrodynamic sensory-motor  
47 integration can be comprehensively studied using decapod crustaceans, including lobsters and crayfish,  
48 as excellent models (Mellon, 2012, Schmidt and Mellon, 2011). These organisms rely on waterborne  
49 chemical cues to produce appropriate behavioural responses, such as social communication,  
50 orientation, predator avoidance, sex recognition and localisation of suitable habitats and food resources  
51 in their environment (Hartman and Hartman, 1977; Schmidt and Mellon, 2011; Thiel and Breithaupt,  
52 2011; Peddio et al., 2019). Stimulus **detection** is mediated by a **large number** of peripheral  
53 chemoreceptor neurons (CRNs) grouped within a vast array of cuticular sensory hairs called sensilla.  
54 These hairs are mainly located on cephalothoracic appendages, such as antennae, maxillipeds  
55 (mouthparts), antennules and pereopods (major claws and walking legs) (Schmidt and Mellon, 2011).  
56 The biramous antennules of decapods are considered the primary sensory organs for olfactory  
57 chemoreception. On their outer flagellum, they exclusively contain the aesthetasc sensilla, which are  
58 innervated by hundreds of CRNs. They mediate many complex odour-evoked behaviours, such as  
59 pheromone-guided courtship, social recognition, aggregation, agonistic interactions, alarm responses, (  
60 Gleeson, 1982; Johnson and Atema, 2005; Horner et al., 2008; Shabani et al., 2008; Bauer, 2011; Solari  
61 et al., 2017), associative learning (Steullet et al., 2002) and food search (Steullet et al., 2001).  
62 A well-known stereotypical behaviour exhibited by decapods is antennular flicking, which is a sniffing  
63 strategy that they apply so that they can explore their water environment to detect relevant chemical  
64 cues (Schmitt and Ache, 1979; Reidenbach et al., 2008). It consists of rapid alternating downward and  
65 upward movements of the aesthetasc-bearing flagellum. This organ helps reset the sensitivity of fast-  
66 adapting CRNs by continuously exposing them to novel aliquots of odour-containing fluid. An increase  
67 in the basal antennular flicking in crustaceans classically indicates the presence of a chemical (Daniel  
68 and Derby, 1991). Other appendages, such as maxillipeds, are involved in chemical detection because  
69 of their specific sensitivity to chemical stimuli (Garm et al., 2005). Furthermore, they indirectly play a  
70 role in this process because of their function as fan organs that can generate water currents and  
71 facilitate the transfer of chemical cues to nearby chemosensors in stagnant environments (Denissenko

72 et al., 2007, Breithaupt, 2011). In crayfish, CRNs distributed in the legs significantly contribute to  
73 sexual discrimination (Belanger and Moore, 2006). They also serve as potential food detectors because  
74 of their marked sensitivity to a number of disaccharides and amino acids (Corotto and O'Brien, 2002;  
75 Solari et al., 2015). However, leg sensitivity was indirectly assessed through a whole-animal bioassay  
76 based on the chemosensory block of legs or electrophysiological determination on an isolated  
77 appendage. As such, these approaches have not provided information about the specific contribution of  
78 the legs to the overall circuitry of sensory-motor integration involving other CRNs-containing organs,  
79 such as antennules and maxillipeds.

80 Here, we present **an innovative technique to evaluate the behavioural responses evoked by chemical**  
81 **stimulation of single legs in a whole decapod crustacean**. It is based on a non-invasive closed-circuit  
82 device consisting of a perfusion/stimulation chamber that can be chronically applied on a single leg of  
83 animals. In this way, the focal perfusion of chemoreceptors is limited to the leg inside the chamber.  
84 This approach may also help obtain more information on complex leg-dependent sensory-motor  
85 integration that involves or recruits other sensory appendages, such as antennules and maxillipeds, of a  
86 whole animal underwater, that is under natural environmental conditions. Even if this technique has  
87 been developed on red swamp crayfish *Procambarus clarkii*, it can be easily adapted to other marine or  
88 freshwater decapods and even other sensory appendages.

89

## 90 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### 91 **Animal collection and rearing conditions**

92 Wild intermoult adult red swamp crayfish *P. clarkii* of both sexes (35–40 mm in carapace length) were  
93 collected using a backpack electrofishing unit (5.2–2.8 A, 230–400 V and 1300 W) in Molentargius-  
94 Saline Regional Natural Park (Southern Sardinia, Italy) during the spring season in 2019. The crayfish  
95 were kept in **Plexiglass**<sup>®</sup> tanks (100 cm long, 50 cm wide and 20 cm deep) containing 60 L of aerated  
96 and bio-conditioned (Aquasafe, Tetra, Melle, Germany) tap water at 22–23 °C in a 16 h light/8 h dark  
97 photoperiodic regime and fed with lettuce, squid or a highly appetitive commercial pellet food  
98 (Shrimps Natural, SERA, Heinsberg, Germany) three times a week. Uneaten food was removed within  
99 1 h after delivery. The crayfish were not fed for 48 h preceding the experiment to prevent the potential  
100 adaptation of their CRNs to food odours. Individuals were kept separated to avoid the reciprocal  
101 exposure of males and females and prevent attacks or cannibalism.

102

103 **Design and application of the device for the perfusion/stimulation of single crayfish legs**

104 A closed-circuit device consisting of a chamber that could be applied chronically on the leg and thus  
105 induce exclusive perfusion and stimulation was developed to chemically stimulate the chemoreceptors  
106 from only one crayfish leg at a time (Fig. 1).

107 The crayfish were removed from their tanks and immobilised dorsal side up on a rigid support by using  
108 Velcro<sup>®</sup> strips to expose the selected leg for the device application. The perfusion/stimulation chamber  
109 was composed of a segment of a flexible silicone tube for aquaristic use (AH 50-400 Air Pump Hose,  
110 Tetra, Melle, Germany; diameter 4/6 mm inside/outside and a suitable length of typically 2.5–3 cm)  
111 applied on the leg and nicely fitted to its two distal-most segments, the propodus (comprising a  
112 movable finger, i.e. the dactyl) and the carpus (Fig. 1A) with their chemosensillar populations. With the  
113 aid of a stereomicroscope (Stemi 2000-C, Zeiss, Oberkochen, Germany), two more thin flexible silicon  
114 tubes (code 289201300, Carlo Erba, Milan, Italy; diameter 0.5/1.3 mm inside/outside) running parallel  
115 to the merus were inserted into the chamber throughout its proximal end (Fig. 1B). The chamber and  
116 the two flexible tubes were secured onto the carpus by using 5 min epoxy resin (Devcon<sup>®</sup>). The distal  
117 end of the chamber was left open for the continuous hydration of the distal tip of the leg, but it was  
118 closed during the experiments with a removable male Luer Lock cap from a standard infusion set  
119 (Pentaven Scalp Vein Set, Pentaferte, Ferrara, Italy), in order to ensure a closed circuit for the exclusive  
120 perfusion/stimulation of the CRNs housed in the leg inside the chamber (hereafter referred to as the  
121 intubated leg). The two thin tubes were previously cut at a suitable length (typically 10-11 cm) so that  
122 they opened within the chamber at the distal and the proximal ends of the leg propodus. They  
123 guaranteed continuous perfusion in the entire portion of the intubated leg by acting as the inflow and  
124 outflow terminals through which water and chemical stimuli could be respectively delivered into and  
125 removed from the chamber. The two thin silicone tubes were further secured to the merus and the  
126 carapace surface by using cyanoacrylate glue (Loctite, Super Attak Power Flex) and were connected to  
127 suitable fittings, consisting of the terminal female Luer Lock PVC fittings from the abovementioned  
128 infusion set (Fig. 1C).

129 Through these fittings, during the experiments the inflow and the outflow terminals could be  
130 respectively connected, by way of male Luer Lock fittings (code 13160-100, WPI, Friedberg,  
131 Germany) and Tygon<sup>®</sup> tubing (code T3601-13, Saint-Gobain; diameter 0.8/2.4 mm inside/outside) to  
132 the perfusion system for stimulus delivery (tube length of about 30 cm) and to the wastewater  
133 collection system (tube length of about 100 cm). The latter system consisted of a 1 L plastic bottle

134 placed below the experimental station, where wastewaters and chemicals coming from the device could  
135 be collected.

136 After the device was applied (application procedures lasted about 25-30 min), the crayfish were placed  
137 into a dry container, and the glue was cured for 1 h before the crayfish were returned to their holding  
138 tanks. Chelipeds of treated animals were always kept banded with Parafilm® (Sigma-Aldrich, Milan,  
139 Italy) strips in order to prevent them from removing the device or cutting the thin tubes connected to it.  
140 Even if the actual level of disturbance caused by the device to the animals could not be exactly  
141 quantified, from a visual analysis the treated animals appeared to be able to walk, move, eat and exhibit  
142 other basic behaviours such as grooming, regardless of the device presence. None of the treated  
143 animals took off the device during the experimental time. All these aspects may therefore be considered  
144 as advantages of this device, the only drawback consisting of its loss when the crayfish moults.

145 After leg intubation, the crayfish were acclimated for at least 3 days before they were used in the  
146 experiments. Only the second/right pereopod was intubated and utilised throughout this study. Dye  
147 tests were performed to verify the effectiveness of the closed-circuit perfusion/stimulation device  
148 (Movie 1). At the end of the experiments, the device fittings were unplugged from the perfusion  
149 system, and the crayfish were transferred to the holding tank.

150

### 151 **Stimulation and supply protocol**

152 The crayfish were individually exposed to the test compounds in Plexiglass® tanks (20 cm long × 15  
153 cm wide × 10 cm deep) containing about 2 L of tap water (22–23 °C). At the beginning of each  
154 experiment, the perfusion/stimulation device was connected to a peristaltic pump (Minipuls Evolution,  
155 Gilson, Milan, Italy) operating at a flow rate of 5 mL/min and ensuring the hydrostatic pressure for the  
156 flow of fluids throughout the whole circuit, up to the wastewater collection system.

157 The crayfish were then allowed to acclimatise until they became motionless, which typically occurred  
158 within 15 min. Aliquots of the stimuli were administered by switching the perfusion/stimulation system  
159 from tap water to a different reservoir, and each crayfish was given 1 min to respond, which began  
160 from the time the stimulus entered the perfusion/stimulation chamber. A recovery interval of 3 min was  
161 set between two successive stimulations to minimise adaptation effects.

162 Trehalose, maltose and cellobiose (Sigma-Aldrich, Milan, Italy), which are disaccharides commonly  
163 known to elicit responses from the leg CRNs of *P. clarkii* (Corotto and O'Brien, 2002; Solari et al.,  
164 2015, 2018), were used as stimuli. They were dissolved in tap water at 10<sup>-1</sup> mol/L, frozen and stored as

165 stock solutions. On the day of the experiments, the stock solutions were thawed and serially diluted in  
166 tap water to obtain three different concentrations:  $10^{-5}$ ,  $10^{-3}$  and  $10^{-1}$  mol/L, which were supplied at  
167 increasing concentrations. The experiments at each sugar concentration were performed on 14 crayfish.  
168 Before stimulation, the response of each crayfish to the same aliquot of tap water (blank, negative  
169 control) was monitored (Movie 2). At the end of each stimulation series, a food extract was tested as a  
170 positive control (Movie 3), and the crayfish that did not respond to the food were excluded from data  
171 analysis. The food extract was prepared as follows: the same commercial pellet food used for rearing  
172 crayfish was finely hashed and suspended (10 mg/mL) in tap water, vortexed for 3 min at 30 Hz  
173 (TecnoKartell TK3S, Kartell, Milan, Italy) and centrifuged for another 2 min at 10,000 rev/min  
174 (Minispin, Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany). The supernatant was then filtered, frozen and stored until  
175 it was used for stimulation.

176 Trials were video recorded for later analysis by using a Samsung SMX-F34 (Samsung, Seoul, Korea)  
177 colour digital camera mounted above the test tank. Video recordings were analysed by an independent  
178 observer blinded to the experimental treatment.

179 Behavioural responses were determined by measuring a three-level ranking score partly in accordance  
180 with the methods of Kreider and Watts (1998) and Solari et al. (2015): 1) the duration of the movement  
181 of the walking legs ( $\text{seconds} \times \text{min}^{-1}$ ), 2) the rate of antennular flicking ( $\text{flicks} \times \text{min}^{-1}$ ) and 3) the  
182 duration of the movement of maxillipeds ( $\text{seconds} \times \text{min}^{-1}$ ).

183

#### 184 **Statistical analysis**

185 Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM. They did not conform to normal distribution (Kolmogorov-  
186 Smirnov test for goodness of fit) and non-parametric statistics were therefore used. For each of the  
187 **three appendage types** (leg, maxilliped or antennule), significant response differences between  
188 consecutive stimulus concentrations and between each stimulus concentration and the relative blank or  
189 food controls were calculated using the Wilcoxon matched pairs signed ranks test. The Spearman rank  
190 test was used for correlation analysis in the responses of the different appendage types. All statistical  
191 analyses were carried out by using the Prism program (GraphPad Software, San Diego, CA, USA). P  
192 values  $<0.05$  were considered significant.

193

#### 194 **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**



195 In the present study, we implemented a new technique for evaluation of the behavioural responses  
196 evoked by chemical stimulation of single legs in a decapod crustacean, the freshwater red swamp  
197 crayfish *P. clarkii*, whilst keeping the whole animal and the stimulus in their natural environment,  
198 underwater. This technique is based on a non-invasive, chronic, closed-circuit device consisting of a  
199 perfusion/stimulation chamber successfully applied on a single leg of the crayfish. This device  
200 guarantees a reliable and focal perfusion coupled with chemical stimulation of the chemoreceptors  
201 from the intubated leg, whilst all other sensory appendages/organs of the animal remained unstimulated  
202 (Fig. 1). This experimental approach also provides evidence of the existence of a reflex activation of  
203 antennules and maxillipeds in the leg-dependent sensory-motor circuitry.  
204 Currently, the sensitivity profiles of CRNs from different appendage types in whole-animal bioassays  
205 are assessed through indirect approaches, which mainly involve ablation or experimental silencing of  
206 selected appendages (for a review, see Schmidt and Mellon, 2011). Therefore, the proposed technique  
207 is innovative.

208

### 209 **Response of a single leg to chemical stimulation**

210 After being acclimated in the experimental tank, the leg-intubated crayfish became nearly motionless.  
211 In the absence of chemical stimulation, they displayed only a basal level of antennular flicking or  
212 grooming activity. However, the focal stimulation of the single leg with the highest concentration ( $10^{-1}$   
213 M) of trehalose, cellobiose and maltose evoked a stereotyped response initially characterised by the  
214 oscillatory movements of the stimulated leg (Fig. 2). This response was immediately followed by the  
215 movements of the other unstimulated legs that were outside the perfusion/stimulation device and then  
216 culminated in a prolonged locomotory phase of the animal within the experimental arena. The duration  
217 of leg movements elicited by trehalose ( $44.1 \pm 5.2$  s/min), maltose ( $41.4 \pm 4.0$  s/min) and cellobiose  
218 ( $23.7 \pm 5.9$  s/min) at  $10^{-1}$  M was significantly longer than that of the blank control ( $2.21 \pm 1.31$  s/min).  
219 In the case of trehalose and maltose, the level of leg activation was even comparable with that triggered  
220 by food ( $42.4 \pm 3.9$  s/min), which is a highly appetitive and stimulating compound for crayfish and thus  
221 selected as a known responsiveness control. Conversely, none of the tested sugars evoked any  
222 significant responses when they were focally supplied to the leg at the two lower concentrations ( $10^{-3}$   
223 and  $10^{-5}$  M). Previous electrophysiological experiments on dissected legs and behavioural trials on  
224 whole animals showed that the legs of this crayfish species are markedly sensitive to trehalose,  
225 cellobiose and maltose (Corotto and O'Brien, 2002; Corotto et al., 2007; Solari et al., 2015). In

226 behavioural trials, disaccharides were effective even at lower concentrations, **consistent with the fact**  
227 that they were supplied in order to stimulate the whole crayfish or all the legs and not just one of them  
228 as in the present study.

229 Here, we disregard the actual contribution of each leg to the overall detection of a given compound, or  
230 whether all the legs may contribute to the same extent. Our results show that chemical detection by a  
231 single leg of crayfish is sufficient to start searching behaviour although an increase in the number of the  
232 legs included in the detection likely enhances the overall sensitivity and thus reduces the threshold to  
233 evoke a behavioural response. Previous studies involving chemosensory blocking procedures reported  
234 that the major chelae and the first walking legs of male crayfish participate in sexual discrimination and  
235 female odour recognition (Belanger and Moore, 2006). To date, our technique is the first to be used for  
236 investigating **the behavioural responses evoked by chemical stimulation of single legs** of whole  
237 crayfish within their natural environment taking advantage of a direct stimulatory approach.

238 Under this experimental condition, crayfish exhibited a locomotor phase characterized by the lack of  
239 any precise orientation and quite different from the stereotyped sniffing and well-oriented search  
240 strategy that they use when they track a three-dimensional plume of odour, which spreads underwater  
241 under natural conditions (Moore and Grills, 1999, Steele et al., 1999; Palmas et al., 2019).

242

### 243 **Reflex activation of antennules and maxillipeds coupled with leg stimulation**

244 In addition to the activating movements of all pereopods leading to crayfish locomotion, a reflex  
245 response of maxillipeds and antennules that were not intubated was produced by the focal stimulations  
246 of the single legs with the tested sugars. As shown in Fig. 3A, all the disaccharides at the highest tested  
247 concentration evoked a reflex activity of maxillipeds ( $40.8 \pm 5.3$ ,  $34.7 \pm 6.5$  and  $22.9 \pm 6.3$  s/min for  
248 trehalose, maltose and cellobiose, respectively). This activity was significantly longer than that  
249 observed after the blank stimulation of the leg ( $2.2 \pm 1.3$  s/min). The response of maxillipeds to  
250 trehalose and maltose was comparable with that observed in leg stimulation using food ( $40.6 \pm 5.4$   
251 s/min). Interestingly, the Spearman rank test showed that the maxilliped reflex activity was positively  
252 correlated with the leg response to all the tested sugars (Spearman  $r_s = 0.81$ ,  $0.77$  and  $0.85$  for  
253 trehalose, maltose and cellobiose, respectively;  $p < 0.0001$  in all cases).

254 Even if the maxillipeds of other crustaceans, such as lobsters, were not specifically tested with these  
255 disaccharides, these sensory appendages are known to contain chemosensory neurons that are mainly  
256 tuned to a number of nitrogen-containing compounds **with low molecular weight**, such as amino acids,

257 and other feeding stimulants, including amines, nucleotides and peptides (Corotto et al., 1992; Garm et  
258 al., 2005). These compounds are usually present in the tissues of lobster preys and considered good  
259 indicators of high-quality food according to their carnivorous habits (Zimmer-Faust, 1993; Schmidt and  
260 Mellon, 2011). Maxillipeds are also indirectly involved in chemical detection because of their role as  
261 fan organs that may generate water currents; consequently, they facilitate the transfer of chemical cues  
262 to nearby chemosensors under stagnant conditions (Denissenko et al., 2007, Breithaupt, 2011). These  
263 organs are strategically located below the frontal sensory organs, including antennules, which are  
264 considered the main chemoreceptive organ of decapod crustaceans (Schmidt and Mellon, 2011).  
265 Therefore, the reflexive movement of maxillipeds triggered by the leg detection of stimulants may  
266 enhance the overall chemosensory performance of the animal in terms of increased chance of  
267 encountering chemical stimuli.

268 Focal leg stimulation with our device also induced the reflex activation of antennules (Fig. 3B). Their  
269 flicking activity stimulated by the highest concentrations of trehalose ( $8.8 \pm 1.5$  flicks/min), maltose  
270 ( $8.4 \pm 1.5$  flicks/min) and cellobiose ( $6.9 \pm 1.3$  flicks/min) was significantly higher than that triggered  
271 by the blank control ( $2.0 \pm 1.3$  flicks/min). Unlike the response of maxillipeds, the reflex response of  
272 antennules was lower than that evoked by the focal stimulation of the leg with food ( $13.1 \pm 1.8$   
273 flicks/min) as if the threshold of the antennules towards these stimulants was higher than that of  
274 maxillipeds. In all the tested sugars, reflex antennular flicking was positively correlated with movement  
275 of the leg (Spearman  $r_s = 0.68, 0.58$  and  $0.52$  for trehalose, maltose and cellobiose, respectively;  $p <$   
276  $0.0001$  for trehalose and maltose,  $p = 0.0004$  for cellobiose).

277 The flicking rate in crustaceans is considered an indicator of chemical detection (Schmitt and Ache,  
278 1979; Daniel and Derby, 1991). Therefore, the leg-dependent reflex activation of antennular flicking,  
279 similarly to maxilliped activation, may be crucial to enhance the chances of antennules to enter relevant  
280 trails of chemical cues. Consequently, they provide animals with a better sampling of their environment  
281 and directionality in search strategies. Crustaceans use parallel chemosensory pathways characterised  
282 by unimodal chemo- and bimodal chemo-/mechano-sensory sensillar populations on mouthparts,  
283 antennae, antennules and legs, which are also characterised by functional redundancy (Steullet et al.,  
284 2001, 2002; Harzsch and Krieger, 2018). Ultimately, multiple detection by similar and different  
285 sensory appendages and their cross-recruitment may help create three-dimensional maps of the  
286 chemical environment for the prompt detection of a chemtrail and its source.

287 With the development of our technique for focal leg stimulation in crayfish, sensory-motor integration  
288 in decapods and other crustaceans may be further explored. Even if our **technique was developed on *P.***  
289 ***clarkii*, it could be easily adapted for use in other decapods** larger than a few centimetres and other  
290 sensory appendages. As such, whole, intact animals may be comprehensively investigated. In principle,  
291 our technique could also be used to investigate the sensitivity of other sensory systems such as thermo-,  
292 mechano-, pH-, osmo-receptors, etc, provided that the chemical/physical stimulus of interest can be  
293 supplied under perfusion.

294 This technique should be used to complement other existing methods based on ablation or silencing of  
295 sensory appendages, not replace them. Thus, direct evidence of specific sensitivity in single  
296 appendages can be obtained, and sensory-motor integration amongst them can be evaluated. In further  
297 studies, this technique may be improved by applying two parallel devices onto two different legs or  
298 appendages to examine combined agonistic (stimuli with the same signs, i.e. both attractive and  
299 repulsive) or antagonistic (stimuli with opposite signs, i.e. one attractive and one repulsive) sensory  
300 inputs.

301

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306 were followed.

307

### 308 **Author Contributions**

309 Conceptualization: P.S., A.S., R.C.; Methodology: P.S., A.S., R.C.; Validation: P.S., G.S., F.P., A.S.,  
310 R.C.; Formal analysis: P.S., G.S., F.P.; Investigation: P.S.; Resources: P.S., R.C., Data curation: P.S.,  
311 G.S., F.P.; Writing - original draft: P.S.; Writing - review & editing: P.S., G.S., F.P., A.S., R.C.;  
312 Visualization: P.S., R.C.; Supervision: P.S., R.C.; Project administration: P.S., R.C.; Funding  
313 acquisition: P.S., A.S.

314

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317

318 **Data availability**

319 The original data are available upon request from the corresponding author.

320

321 **Competing interests**

322 The authors declare no competing or financial interests.

323 **Figure captions**

324 **Figure 1.** Design and application of the device for the perfusion/stimulation of single crayfish legs used  
325 in this study. **(A)** Photograph of a second pereopod showing the different segments. **(B)** Photograph of  
326 the closed-circuit device consisting of a perfusion/stimulation chamber for the intubation of the leg and  
327 two flexible silicon tubes for the delivery (inflow) and removal (outflow) of water/chemicals with the  
328 fittings to be connected to the perfusion and waste collection systems. **(C)** View of the whole crayfish  
329 with the device (arrow) applied on the leg, with the tubes secured on the carapace and the fittings  
330 connected to the perfusion system during the supply of a green liquid. Ch = cheliped, a = antenna and  
331 A-lf and A-mf = lateral and medial flagella of antennules, respectively.

332

333 **Figure 2.** Duration of leg movements determined over a 1 min interval during stimulation with  
334 increasing concentrations of trehalose (Tre), maltose (Mal) and cellobiose (Cell) compared with the  
335 blank (B-Ctrl) and food (F-CTRL) controls and supplied with the device for the perfusion/stimulation  
336 of a single leg. Values are means  $\pm$  SEM (vertical bars) from 14 crayfish. For each tested sugar, \*  
337 indicates responses significantly different from those at the next lower concentrations, whilst B and F  
338 denote significant differences compared with B-Ctrl and F-CTRL, respectively ( $p < 0.05$ , Wilcoxon  
339 matched pair signed rank test).

340

341 **Figure 3.** Duration of maxilliped movements **(A)** and frequency of antennular flicking **(B)** determined  
342 over a 1 min interval during stimulation with increasing concentrations of trehalose (Tre), maltose  
343 (Mal) and cellobiose (Cell) compared with those of the blank (B-Ctrl) and food (F-CTRL) controls and  
344 supplied with the device for the perfusion/stimulation of a single leg. Values are means  $\pm$  SEM  
345 (vertical bars) from 14 crayfish. For each tested sugar, \* indicates responses significantly different from  
346 those at the next lower concentrations, whilst B and F denote significant differences compared with B-  
347 Ctrl and F-CTRL, respectively ( $p < 0.05$ , Wilcoxon matched pair signed rank test).

348 **References**

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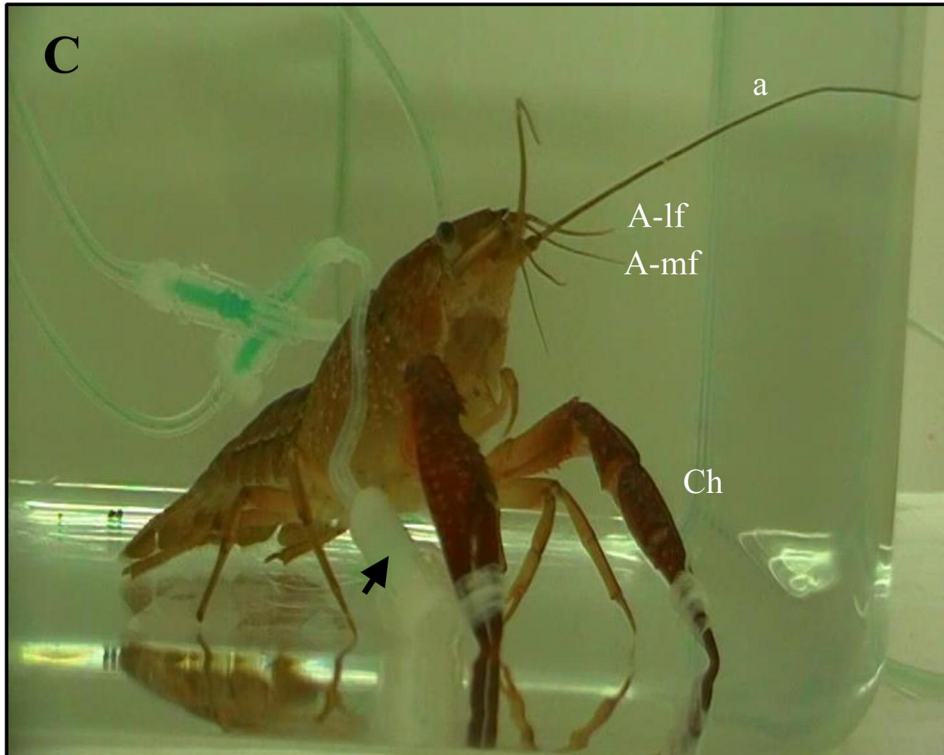
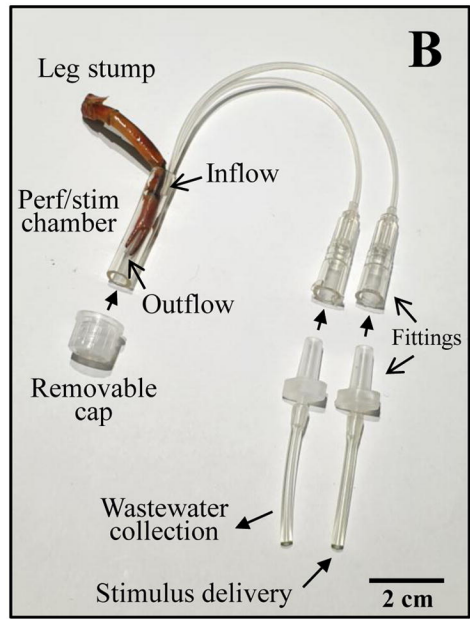
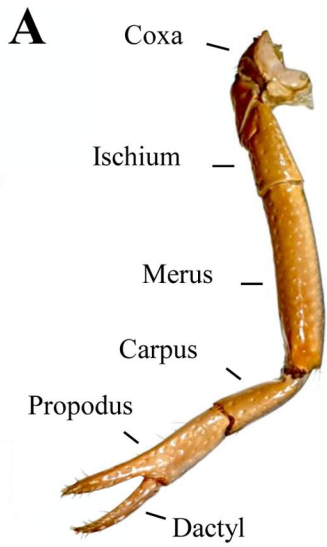
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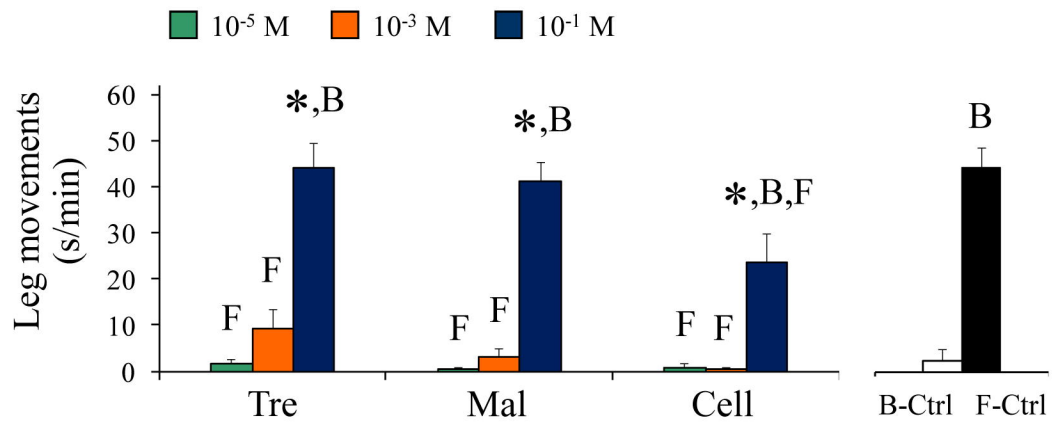
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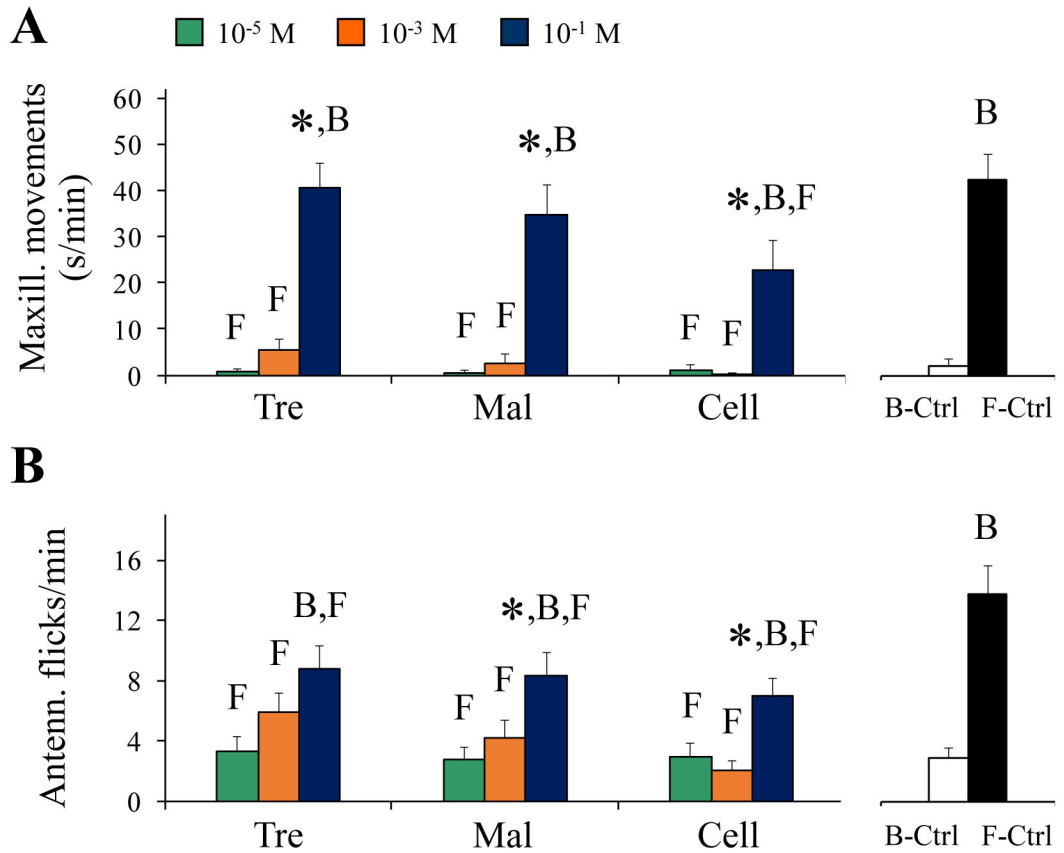
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**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**