



Insecticide Mode of Action

Training slide deck

IRAC MoA Workgroup

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What is an Insecticide's 'Mode of Action'?

The Mode of action defines the process of how an insecticide works on an insect or mite at a molecular level

Why is it good to know the Mode of Action of an Insecticide?

Knowing the Mode of action of an insecticide is key to managing resistance

The Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC) is a coordinated industry response to resistance management

ADME is an important factor in an insecticide's bioavailability



■ Absorption

- Through the cuticle
- Orally through consumption
- Inhaled through spiracles as vapor

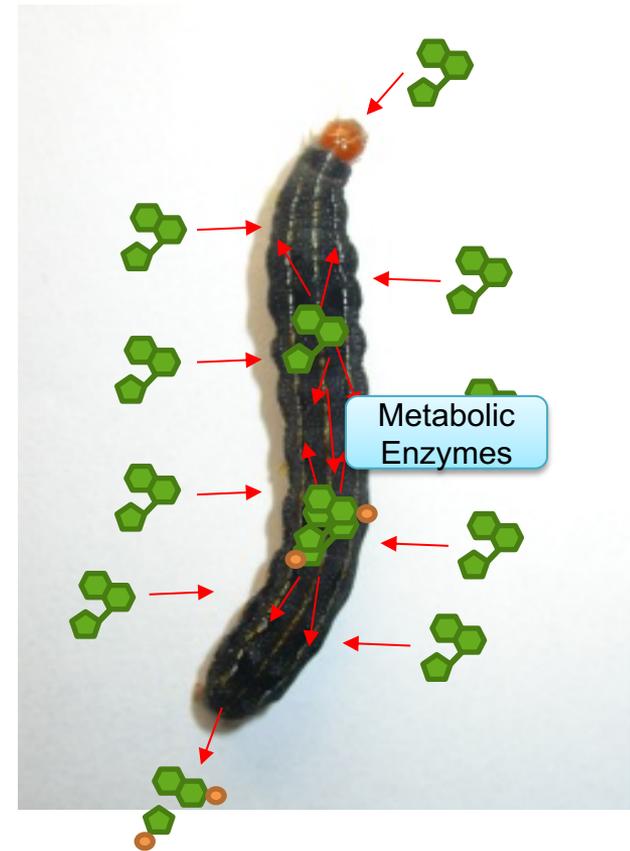
■ Distribution

- Through the body to target sites

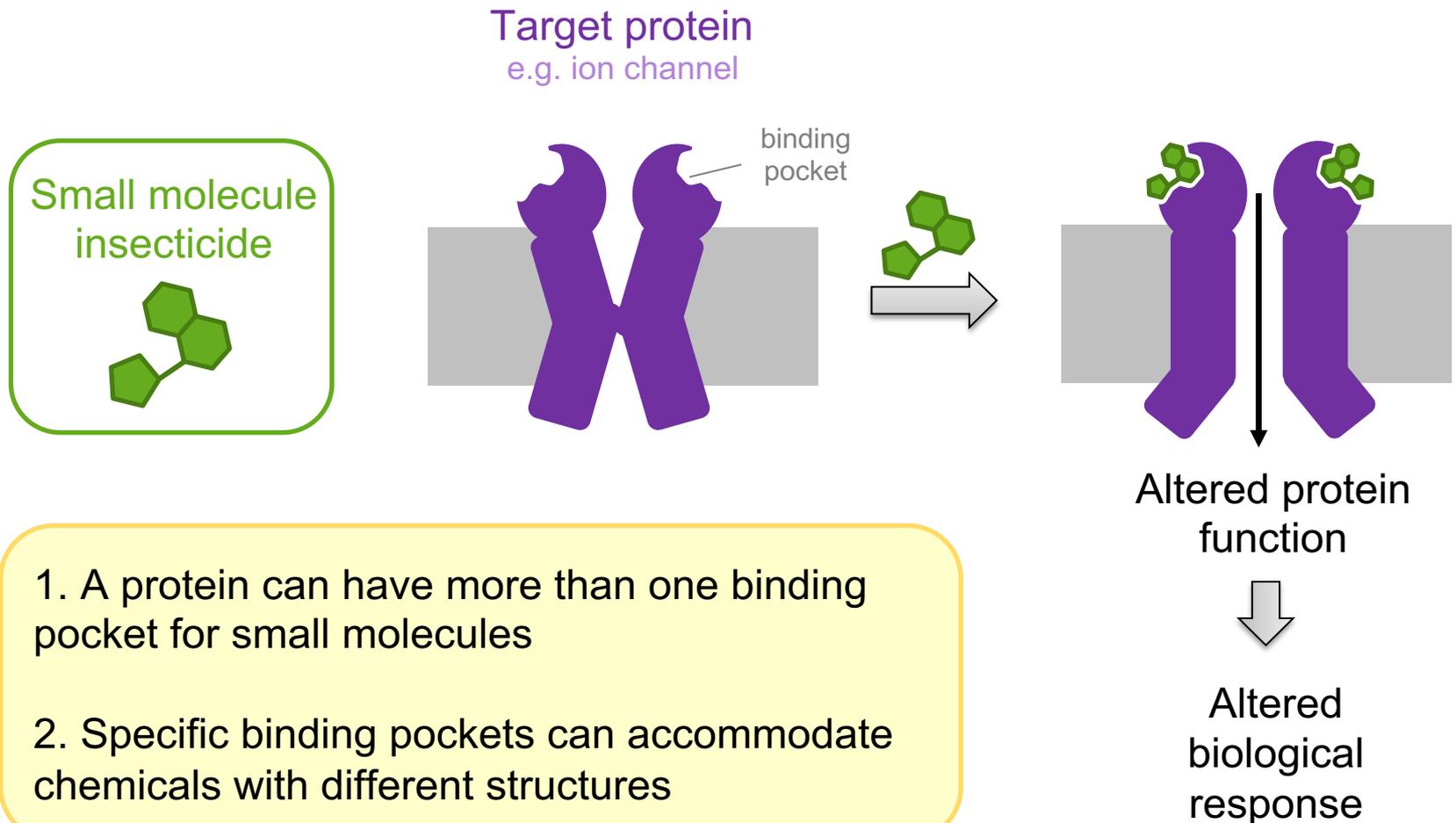
■ Metabolism (Break down)

- By insect defense mechanisms

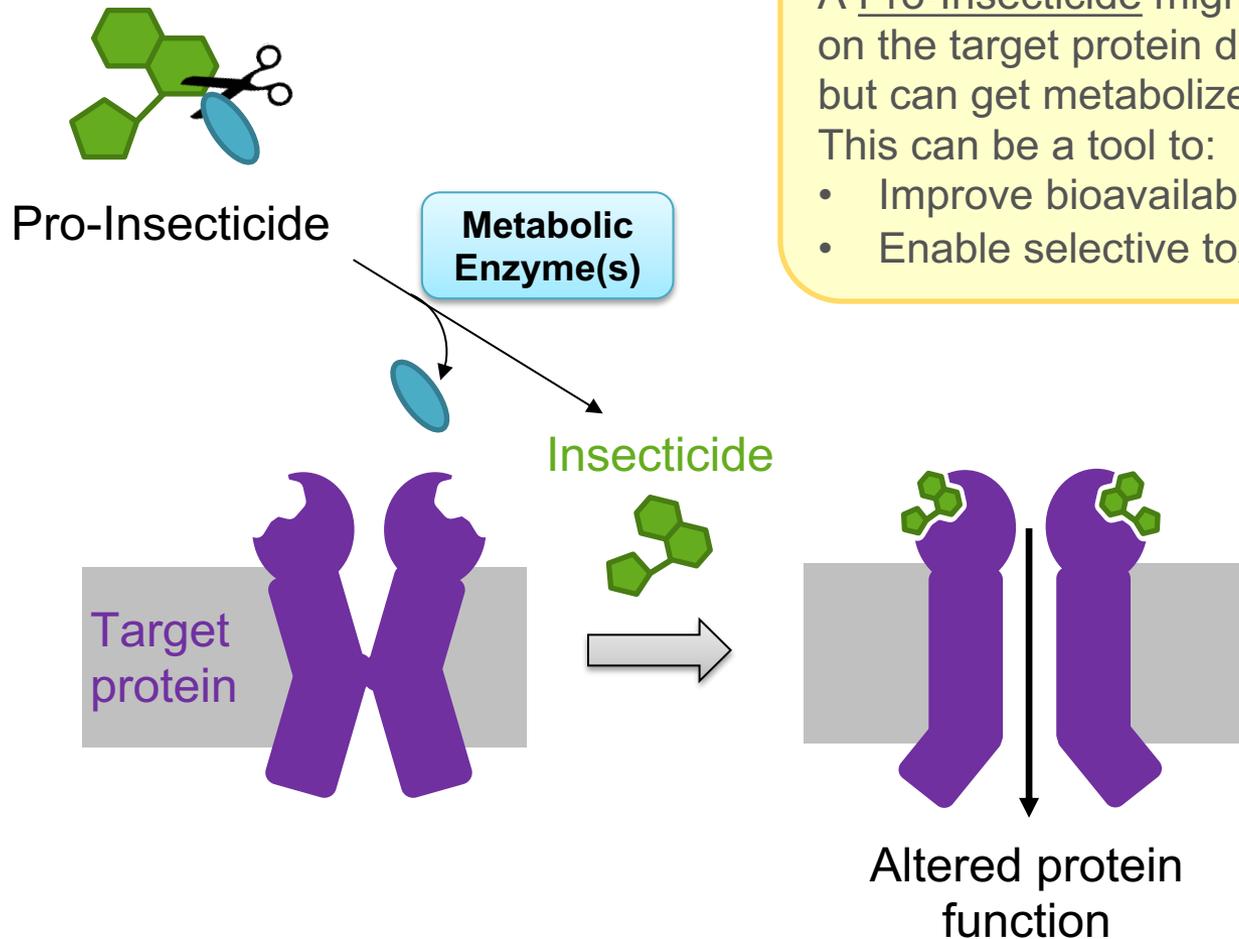
■ Excretion



Insecticides act on key functional proteins that regulate vital processes



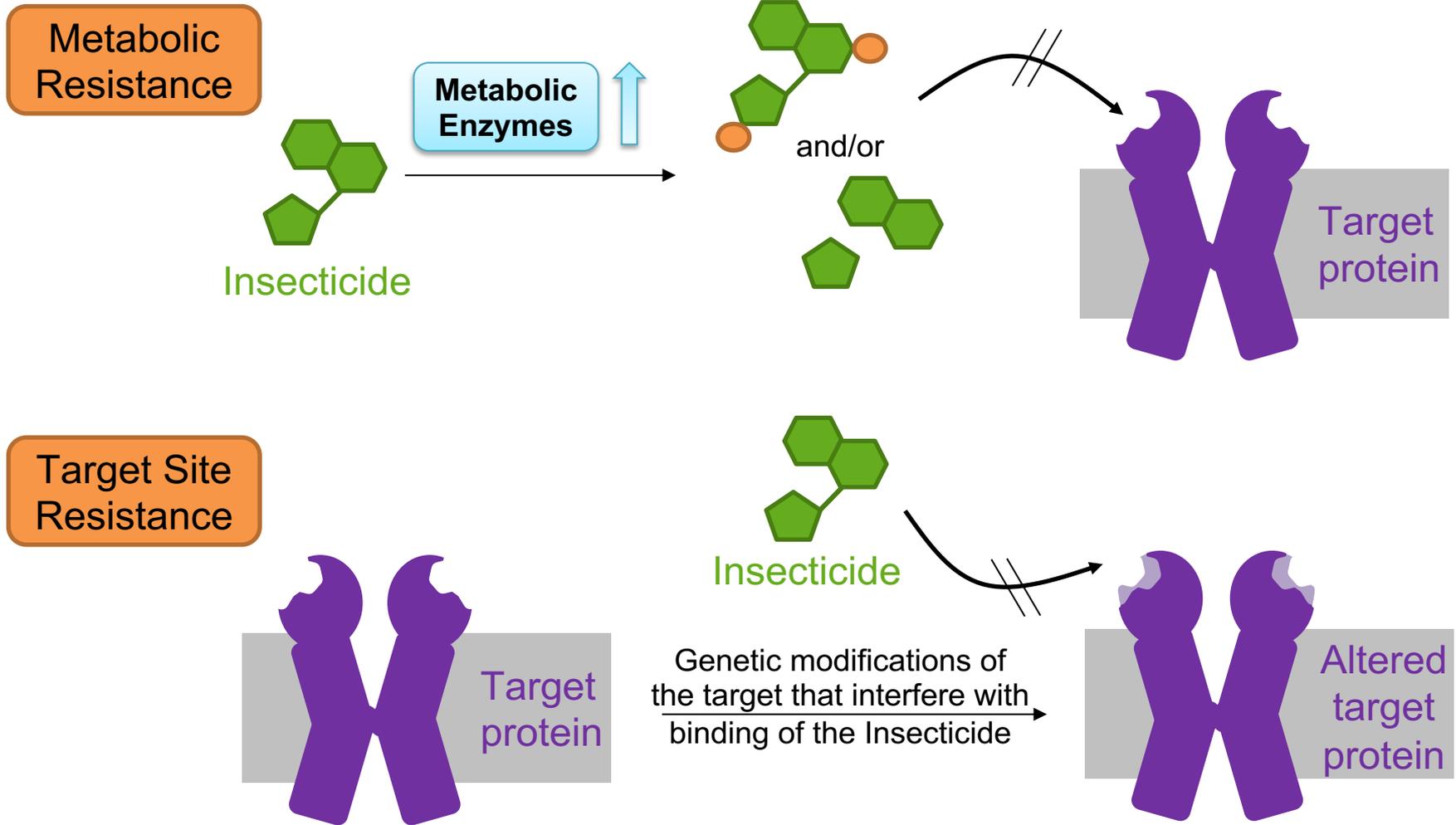
The Pro-Insecticide concept



A Pro-Insecticide might have negligible activity on the target protein due to protecting groups, but can get metabolized *in vivo* to its active form. This can be a tool to:

- Improve bioavailability
- Enable selective toxicity

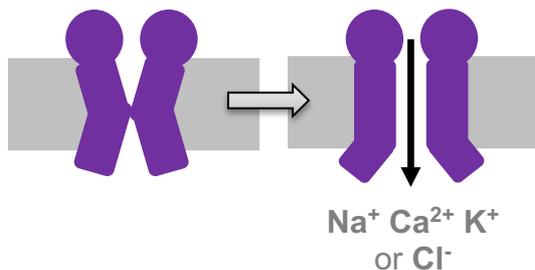
Major mechanisms of Insecticide Resistance



Key functional proteins that are targets for Insecticides

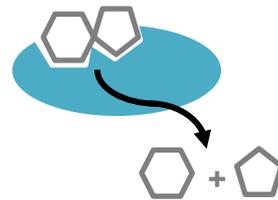
Ion channels

essential for bioelectricity



Enzymes

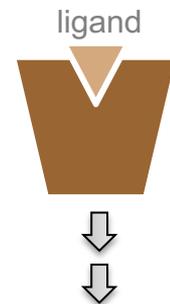
biocatalysts



Proteins accelerating chemical reactions

Receptors

signal transducer



Binding of a ligand triggers a response

Insecticide Mode of Action

Major classes



Nerve & Muscle



Growth



Respiration

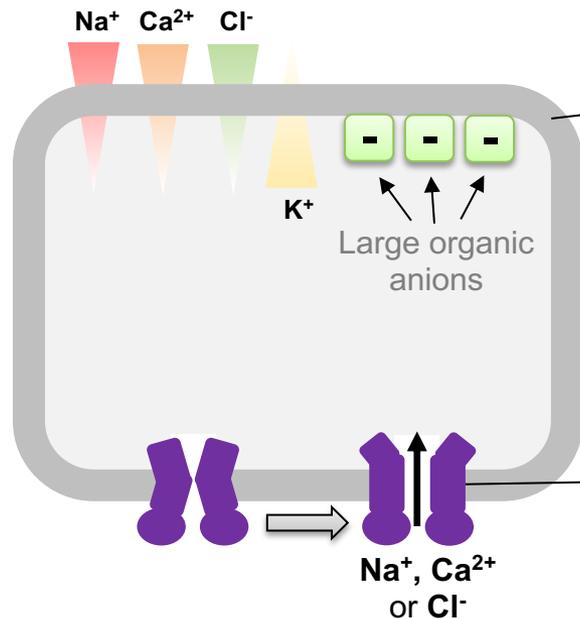


Midgut



Unknown or Non-Specific

Ion channels are important targets of neuromuscular disruptors



Cells are surrounded by a cell membrane, which acts like an insulator separating two conducting media

An asymmetric separation of charges across the cell membrane makes the inside **negative** compared to the outside of the cell (**membrane potential**)

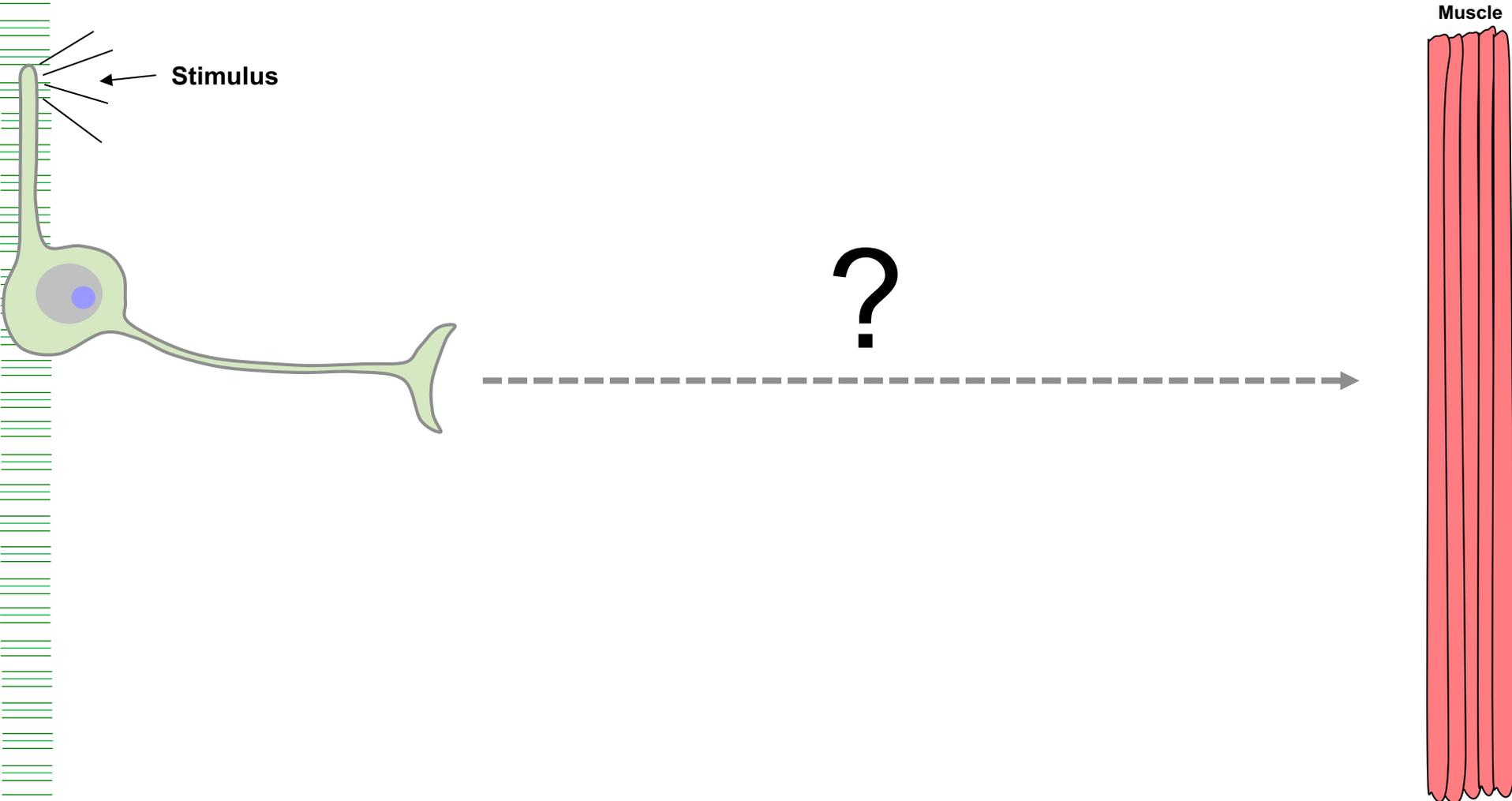
Ion channels

are pore-forming membrane proteins that transduce signals by controlling the flux of ions across the cell membrane. Their concentration gradients together with the membrane potential determine the direction of ion flux.

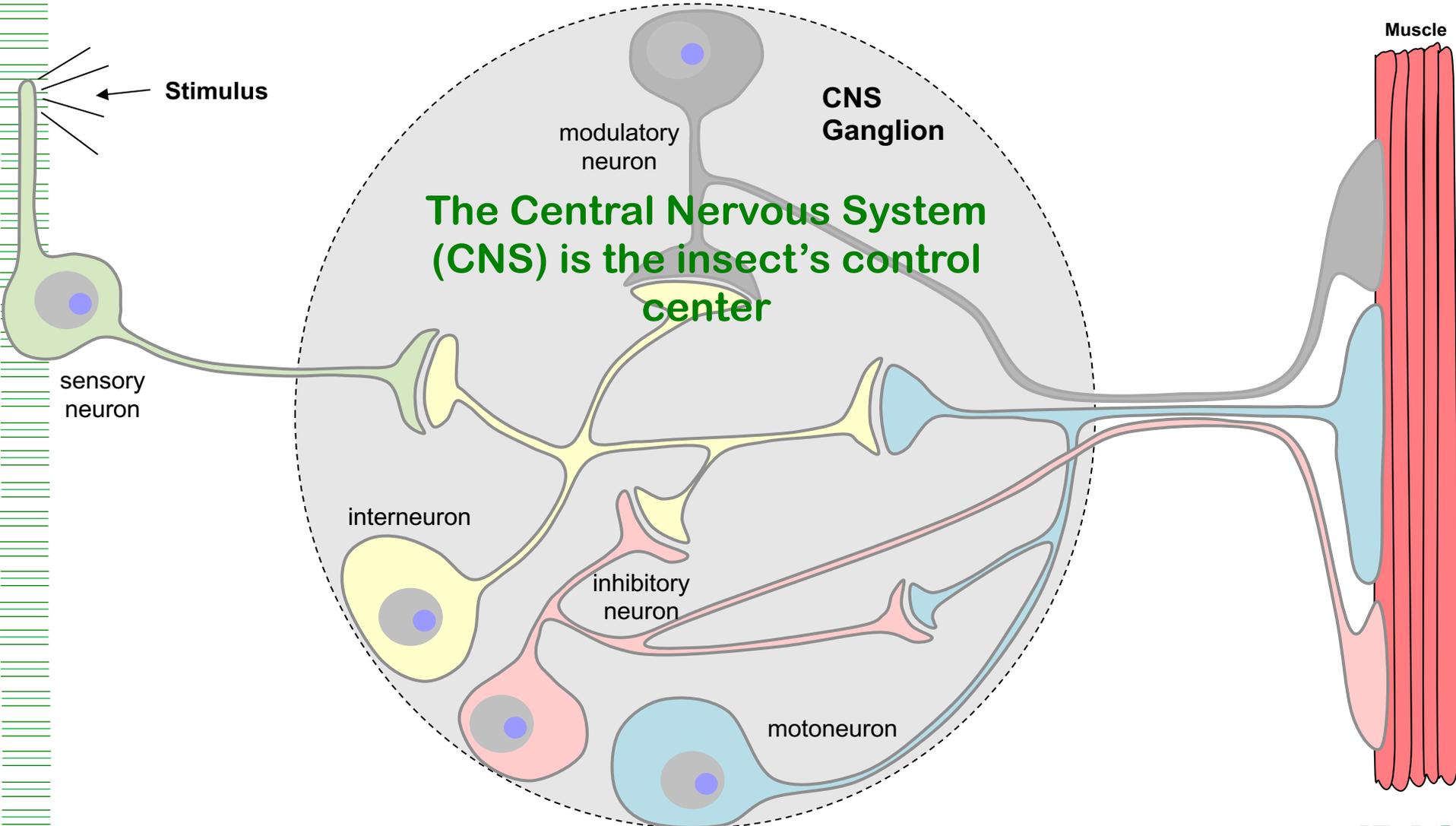
In **electrically excitable cells** (neurons, muscle cells) ion channels play an important role in fast signal transduction over long distances

- **Gating:** Trigger for channel opening (voltage, ligand, etc.)
- **Ion selectivity:** Ion preference of the channel

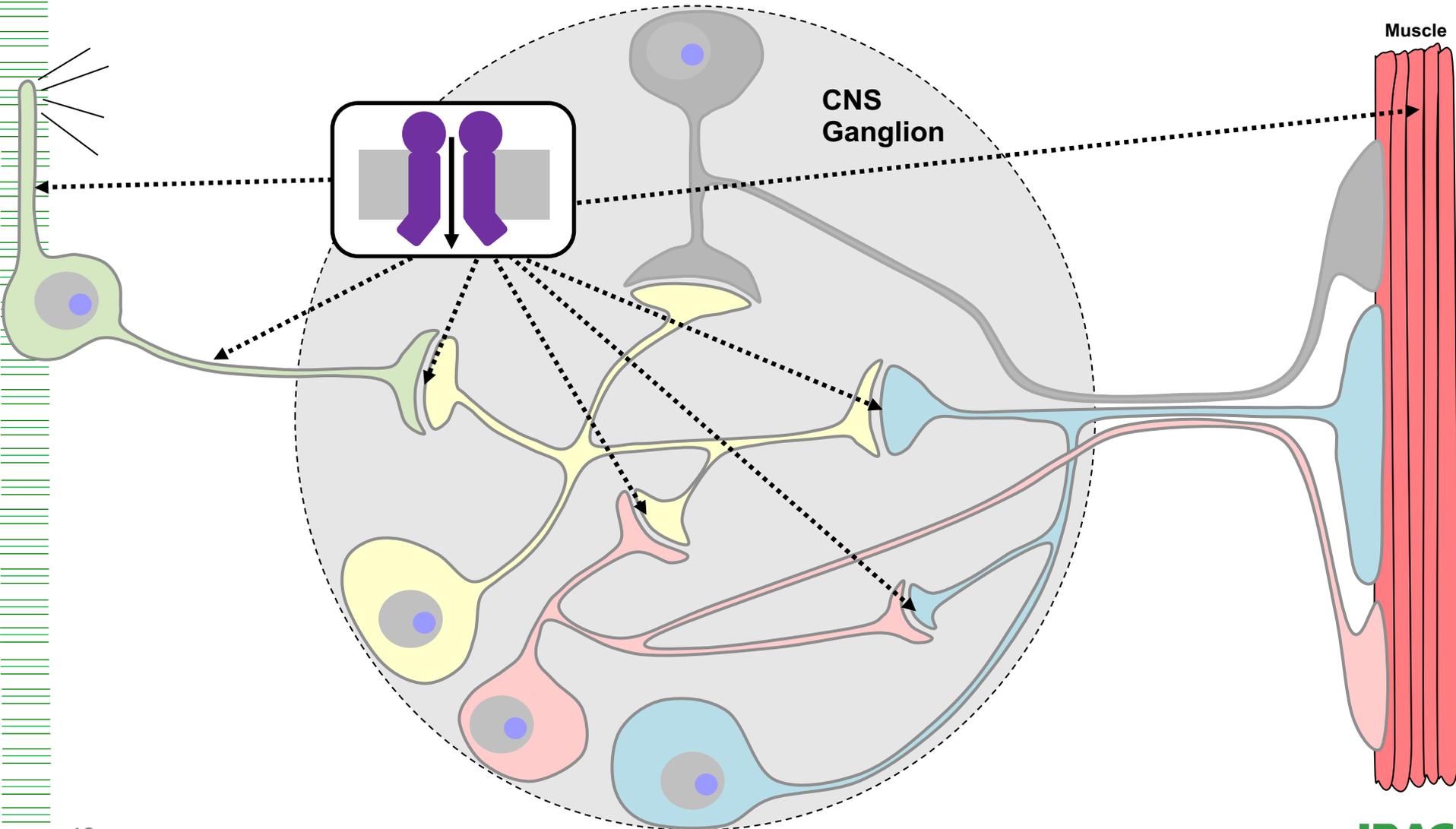
The Insect Neuromuscular system: Translating a stimulus into (muscle) action



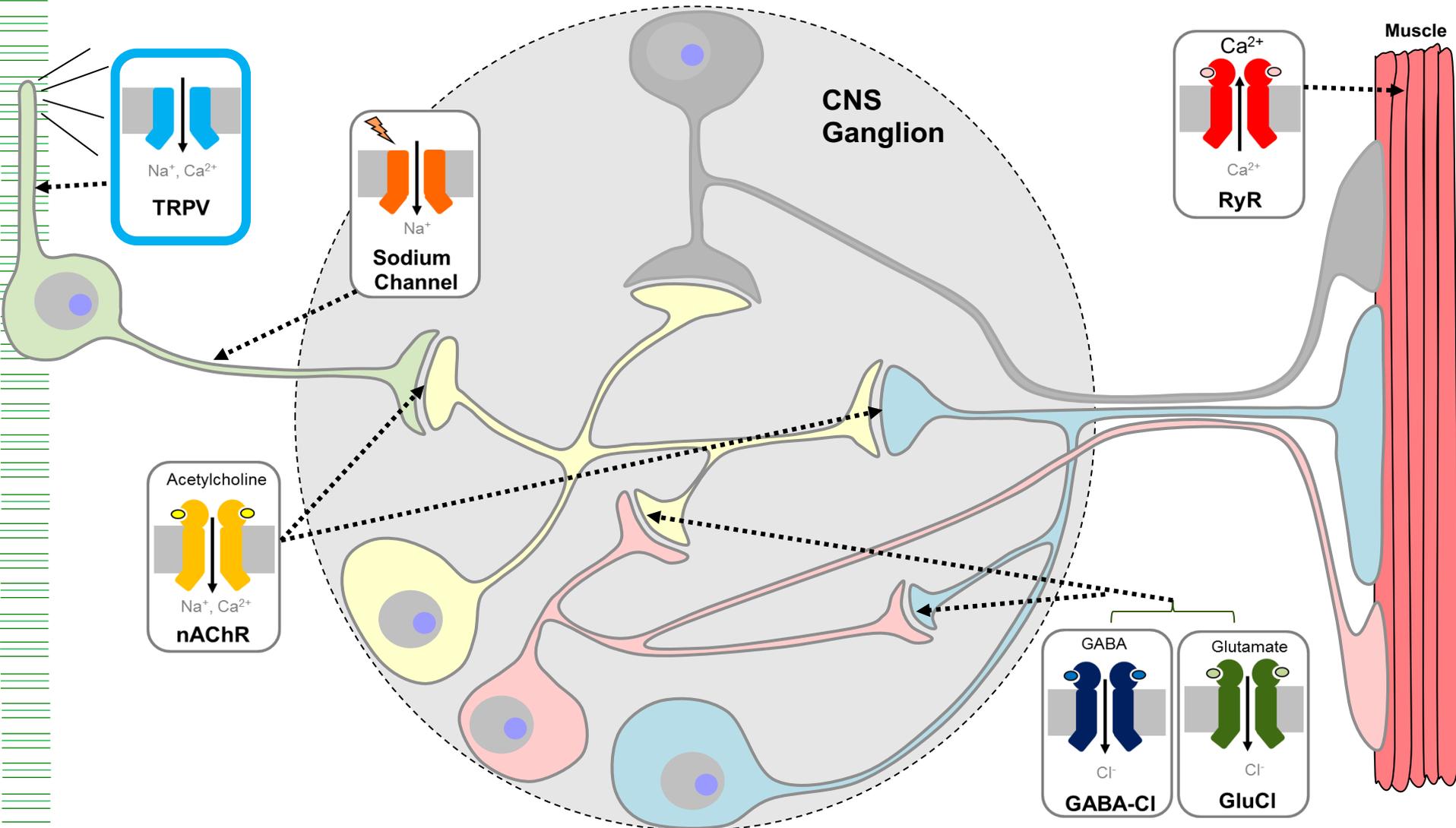
Different types of neurons are involved in signal transduction and fine tuning



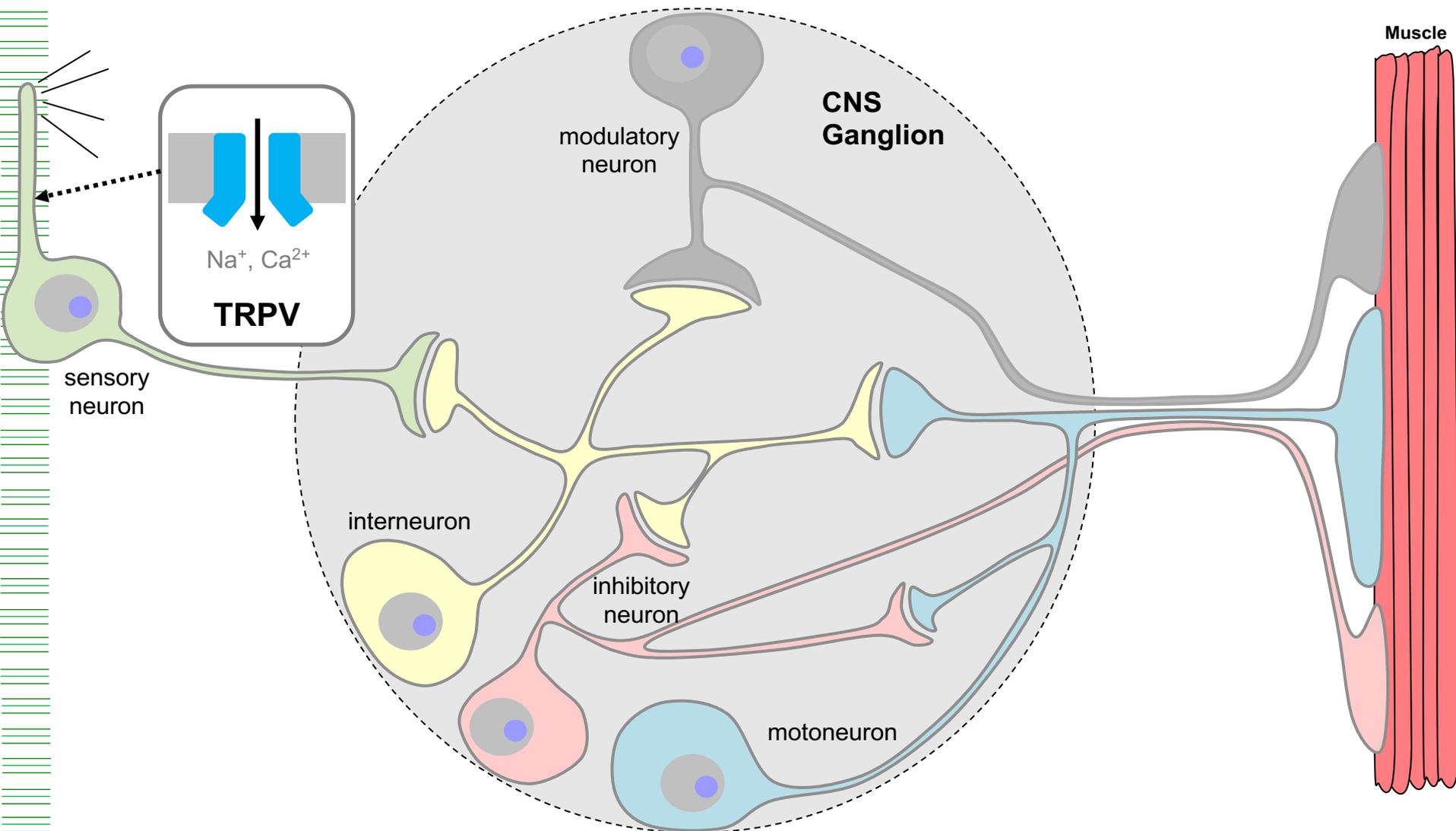
Ion channels play diverse roles within the neuromuscular system



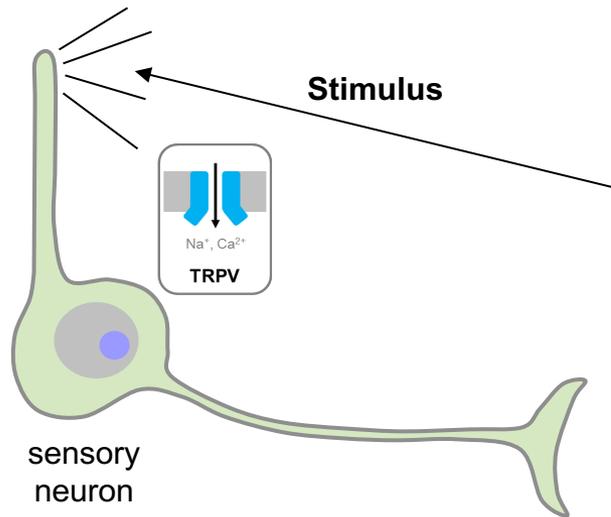
Overview of ion channels targeted by neuromuscular disruptors



The TRPV channels exist in specialized sensory neurons that detect stretch



TRPV channels play an important role in insect stretch receptor signaling (Chordotonal Organ)



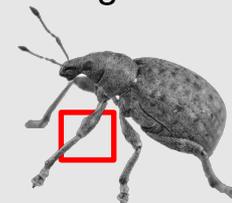
- Sight
 - Taste
 - Smell
 - Touch
 - Hearing (antenna)
 - Gravity (antenna)
 - Proprioception* (joints)
 - Others
- } Sensed by stretch receptors

*Proprioception is the detection of the relative position and motion of body parts

When a doctor tests reflexes with a rubber hammer (knee jerk reflex) local stretch receptors are activated that signal to the spinal cord and back to the target muscle.



Insects also have stretch receptors that detect joint bending forces



Insecticides acting on TRPV channels interfere with stretch receptor signaling

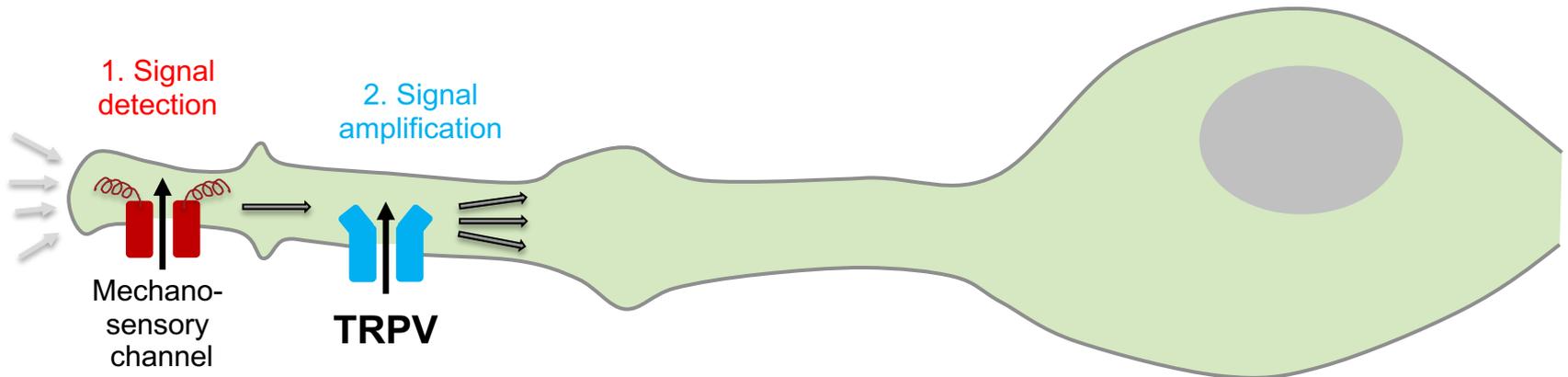
- TRPV channel modulators affect Chordotonal organs (COs), stretch receptors in the insect joints that sense relative position of body parts ([proprioception](#))



Leg extension caused by a TRPV modulator (can be imagined as a 'molecular' rubber hammer)

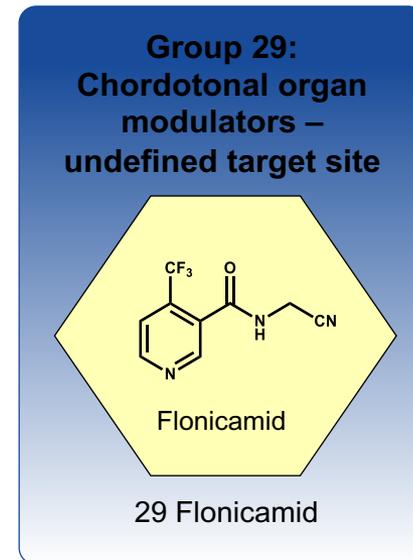
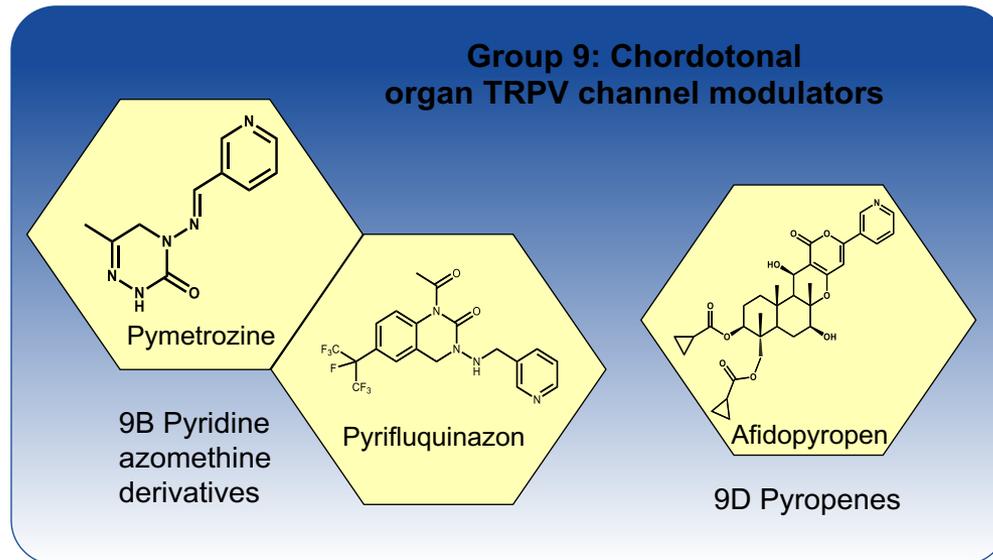


- TRPV channels amplify the weak mechanosensory signal in chordotonal neurons



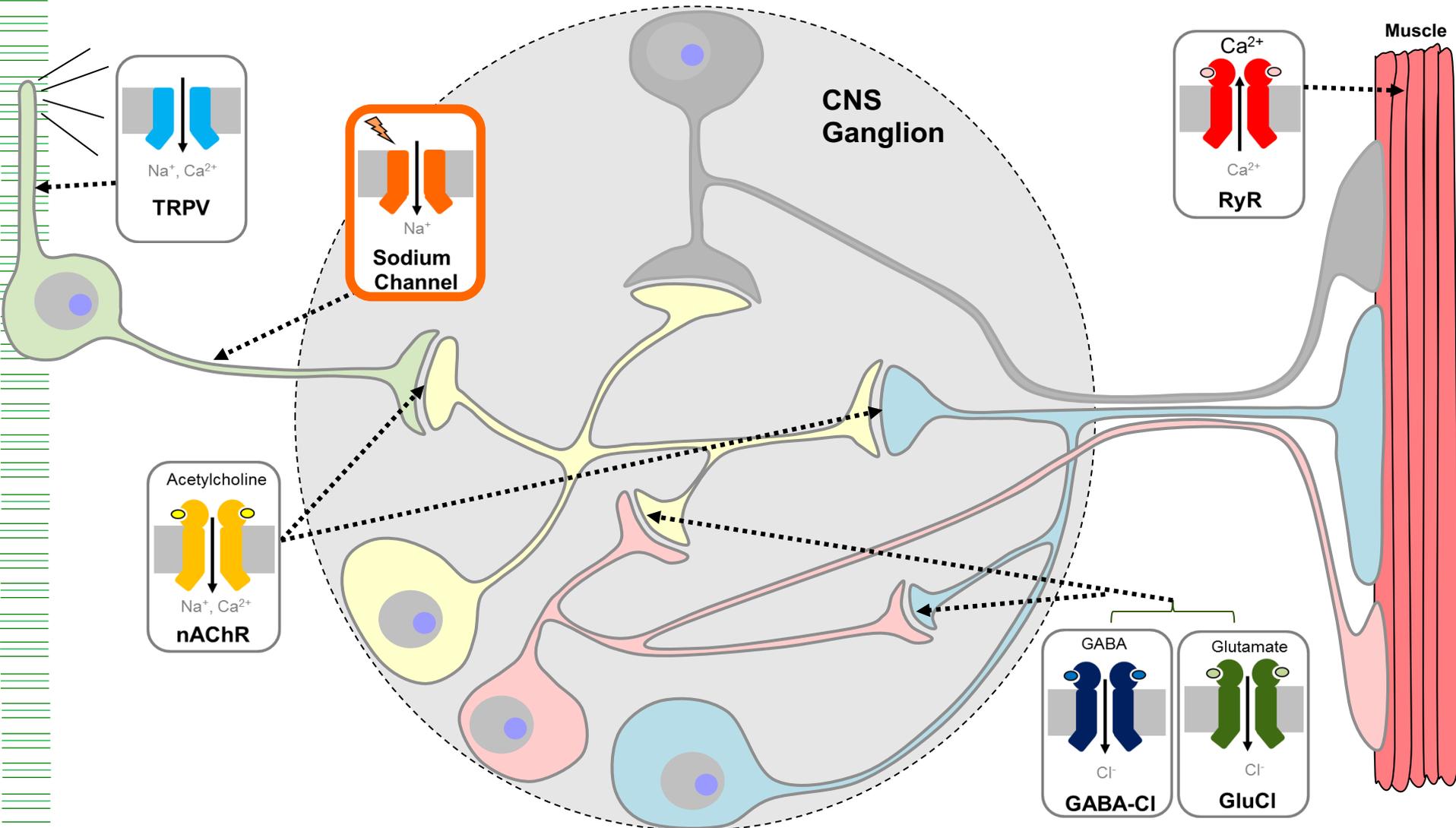
- Modulation of TRPV channels generates continuous chordotonal nerve signals independent of joint movement. This leaves insects deaf and uncoordinated, resulting in rapid feeding cessation, leading to starvation and ultimately death

TRPV channel and chordotonal organ modulators

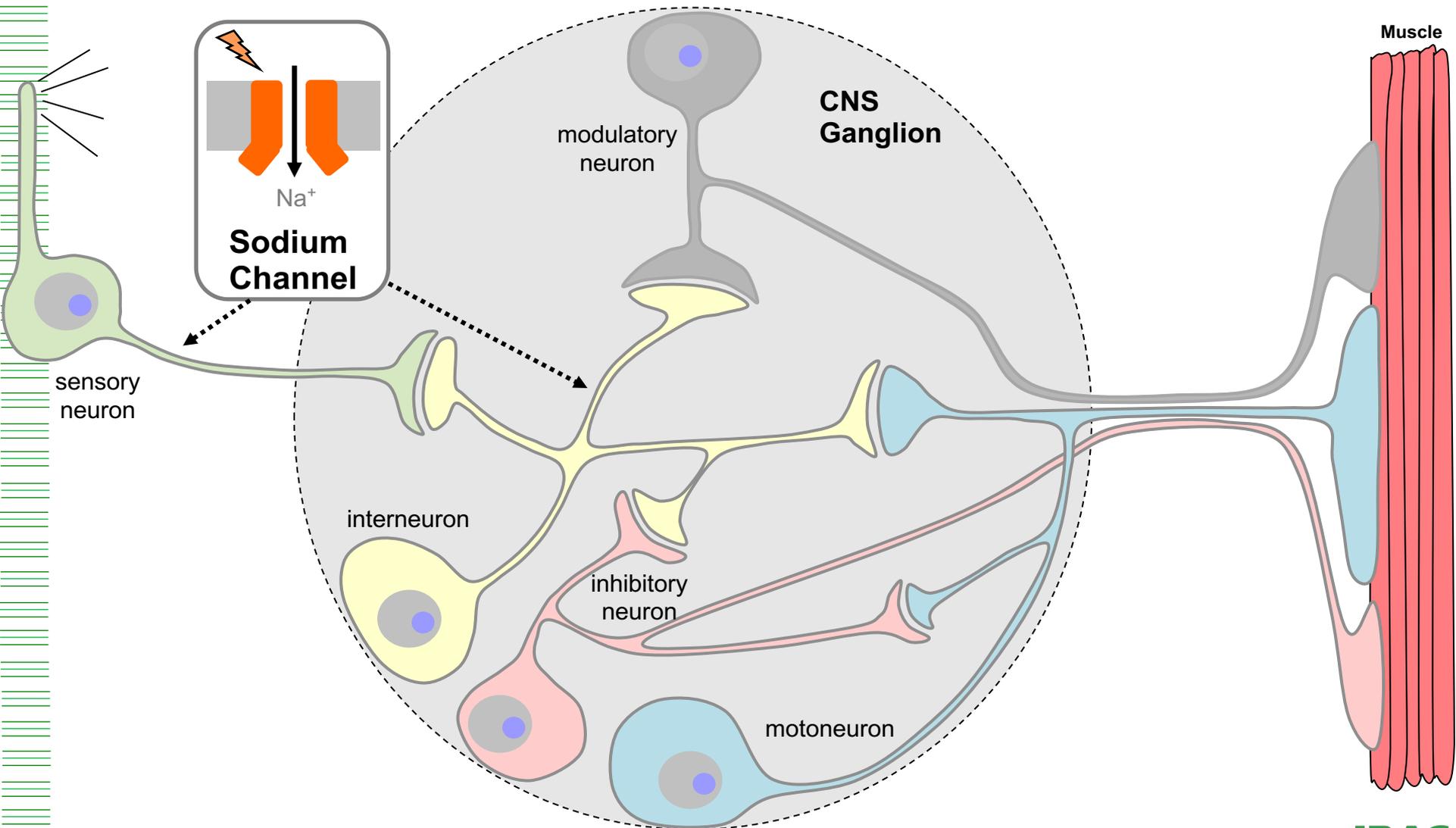


Flonicamid produces symptoms similar to TRPV channel modulators and like its more active metabolite affects chordotonal organs. However, Flonicamid appears not to act directly on TRPV channels, suggesting a different target site in chordotonal organs.

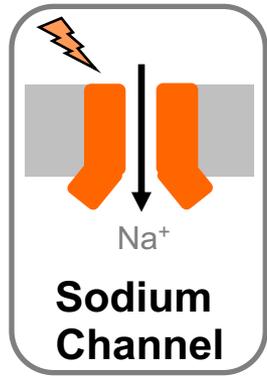
Overview of ion channels targeted by neuromuscular disruptors



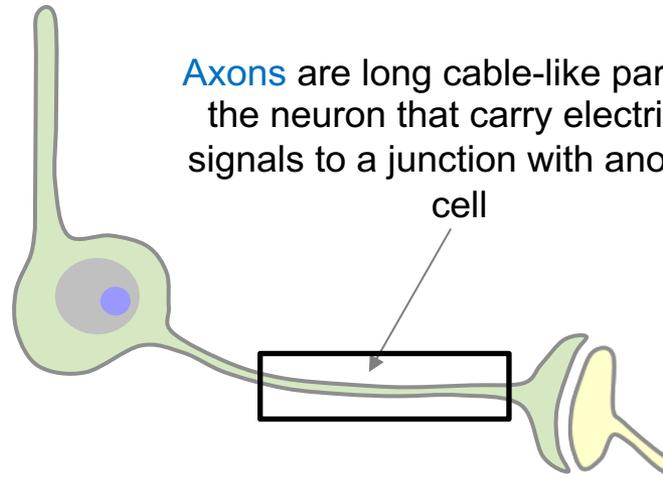
Insecticides acting on Sodium channels



Sodium channels play a crucial role in signal propagation in excitable cells

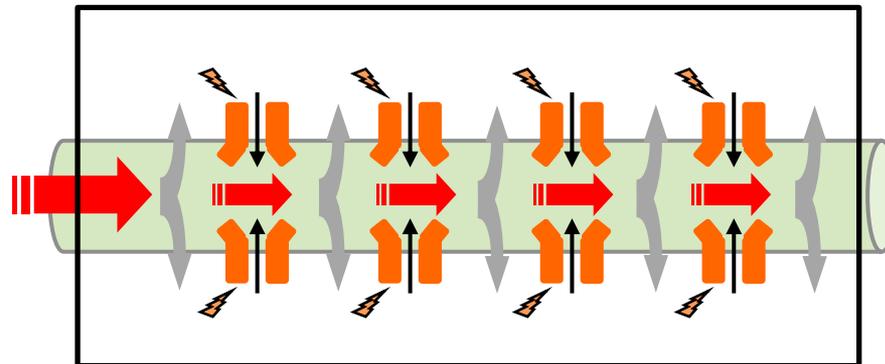


Axons are long cable-like parts of the neuron that carry electrical signals to a junction with another



Voltage-dependent sodium channels contain a built-in **voltage sensor** which detects local **positive** changes in membrane potential

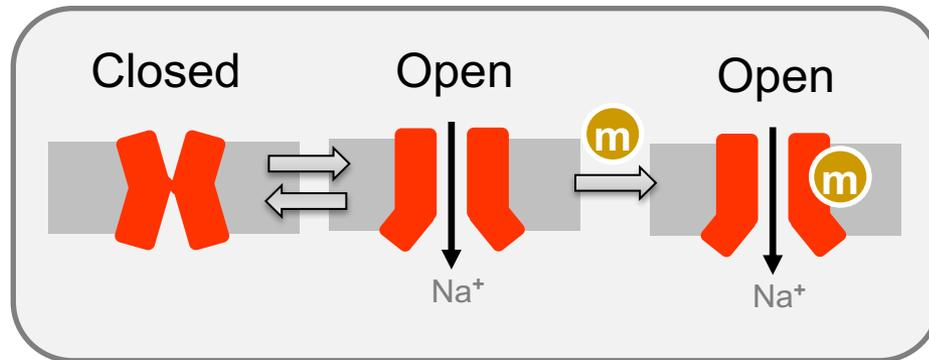
This triggers opening of the channels and sodium entry



Entry of sodium results in a more positive membrane potential that in turn activates adjacent sodium channels thus propagating the signal along the axon

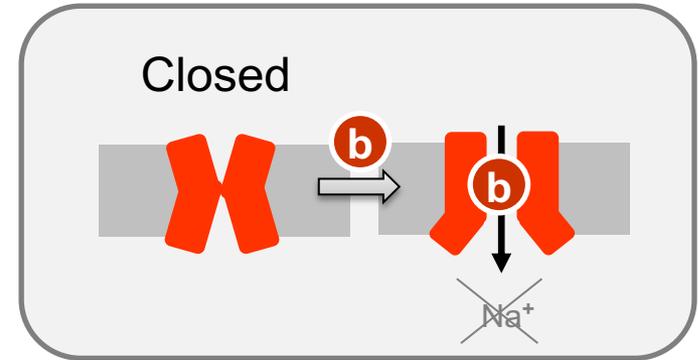
Sodium channel modulators & blockers

Sodium channel **m**odulators



- prolonged opening of sodium channels
- prolonged action potentials
- restimulation of the nerve and repetitive firing
- hyperexcitation

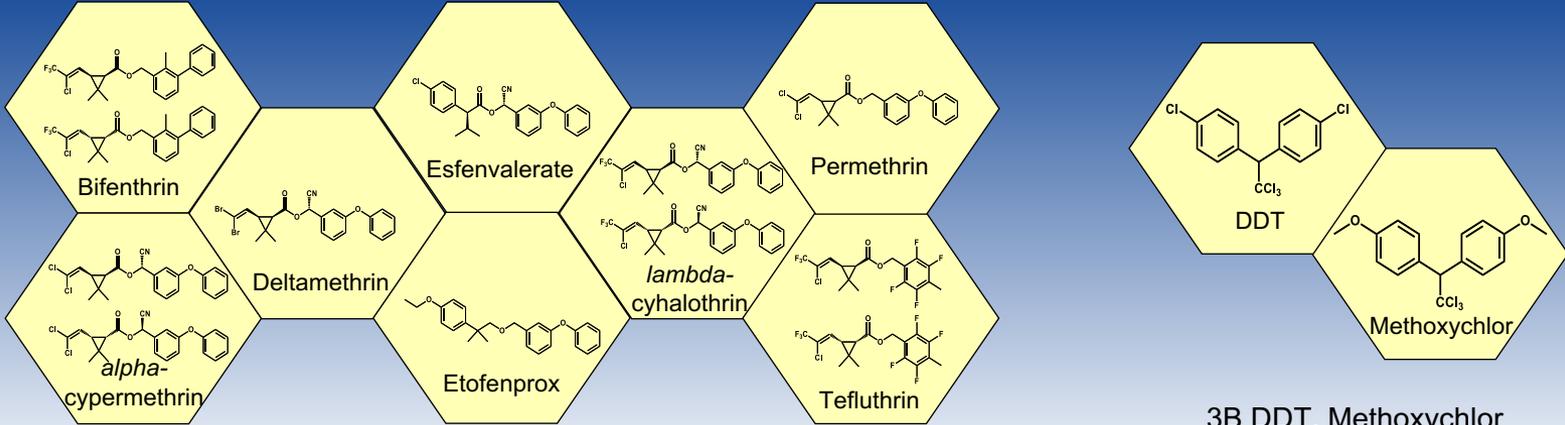
Sodium channel **b**lockers



- obstruction of the sodium channel pore
- block of nerve action potentials
- paralysis

Insecticides acting on Sodium channels

Group 3: Sodium channel modulators

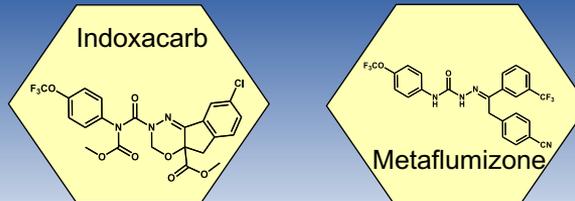


3A Pyrethroids Pyrethrins

(Only major representatives of group 3A are shown)

3B DDT, Methoxychlor

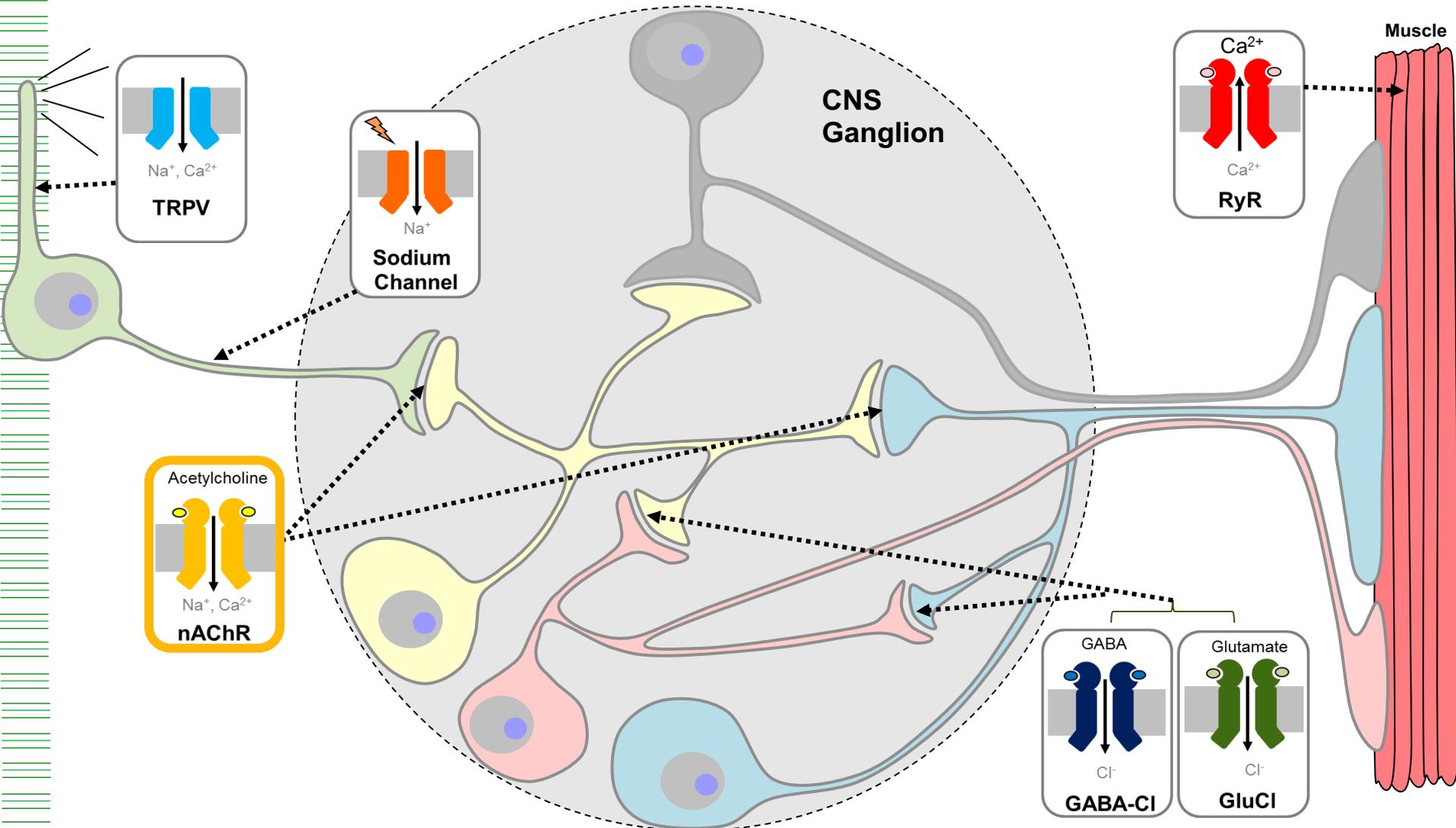
Group 22: Voltage-dependent sodium channel blockers



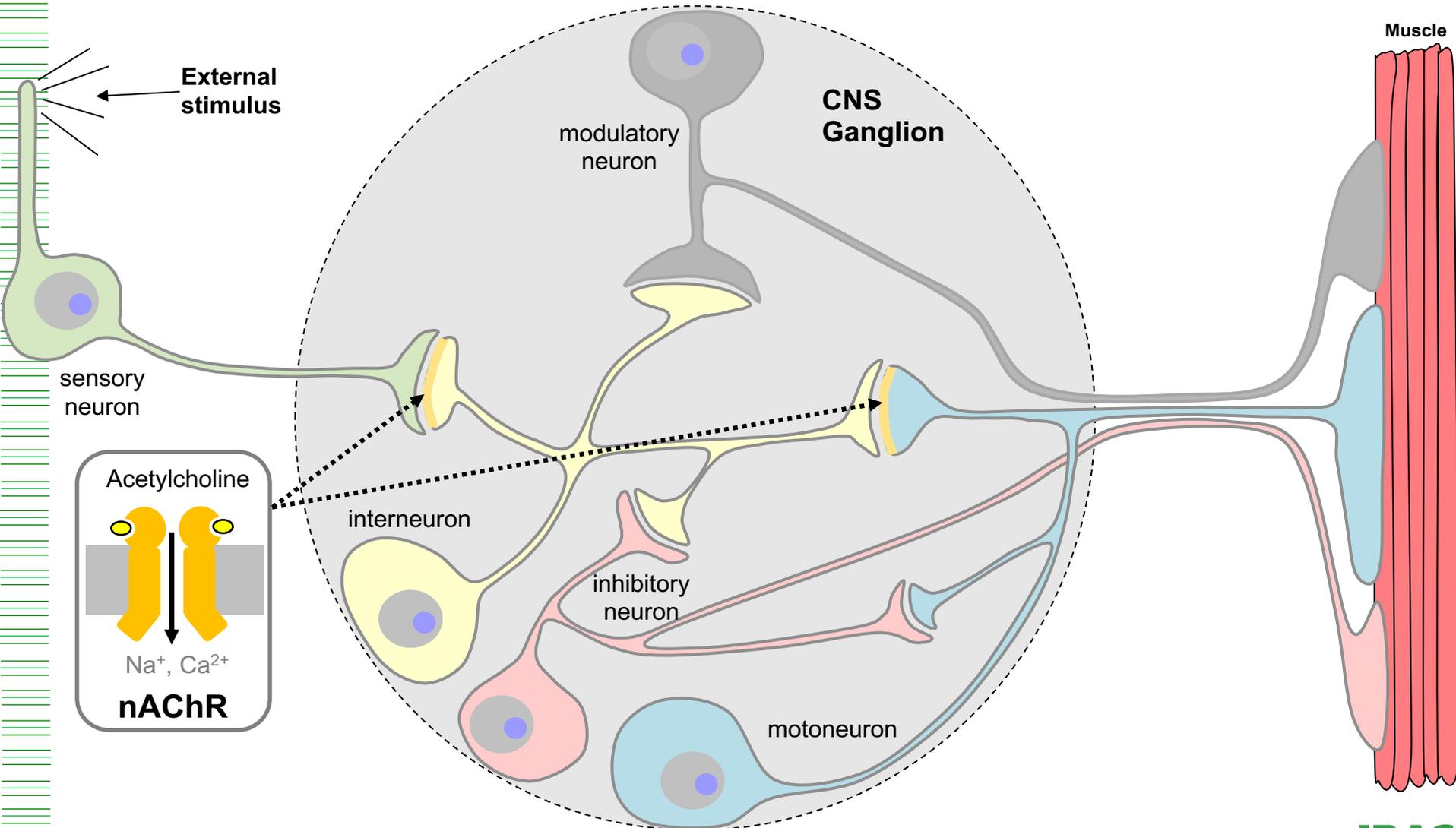
22A Oxadiazines

22B Semicarbazones

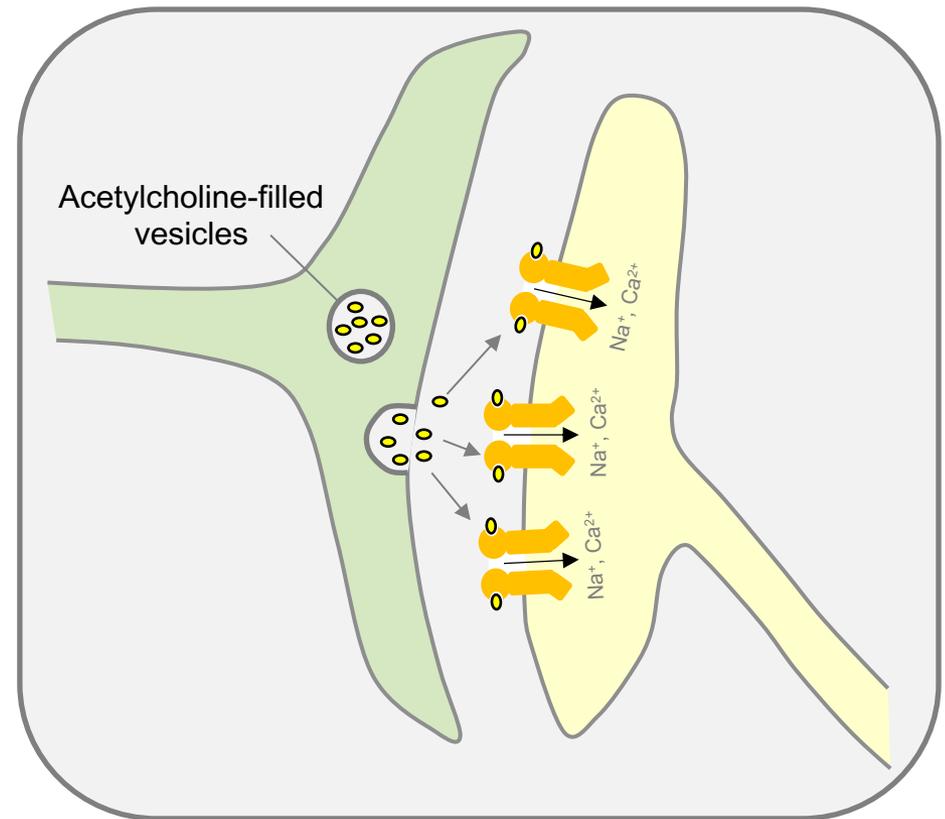
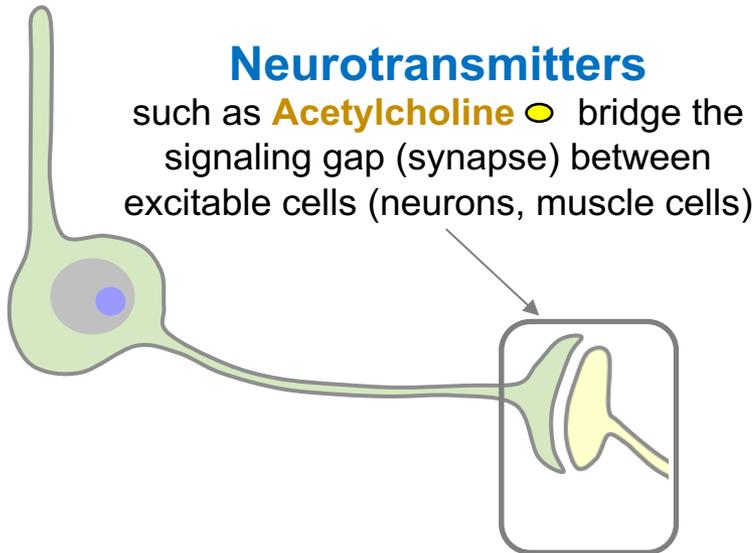
Overview of ion channels targeted by neuromuscular disruptors



Insecticides acting on nicotinic Acetylcholine receptors (nAChR)



Insecticides acting on nicotinic Acetylcholine receptors (nAChR)



- Most fast excitatory synapses in the insect CNS use **Acetylcholine** as the neurotransmitter
- Synaptic vesicles store **Acetylcholine** that can be released into the synapse in response to nerve impulses and in turn activate postsynaptic nAChRs

Insecticides acting on nAChR

nAChR competitive modulators

- Bind to the same site as acetylcholine
- desensitize nAChR



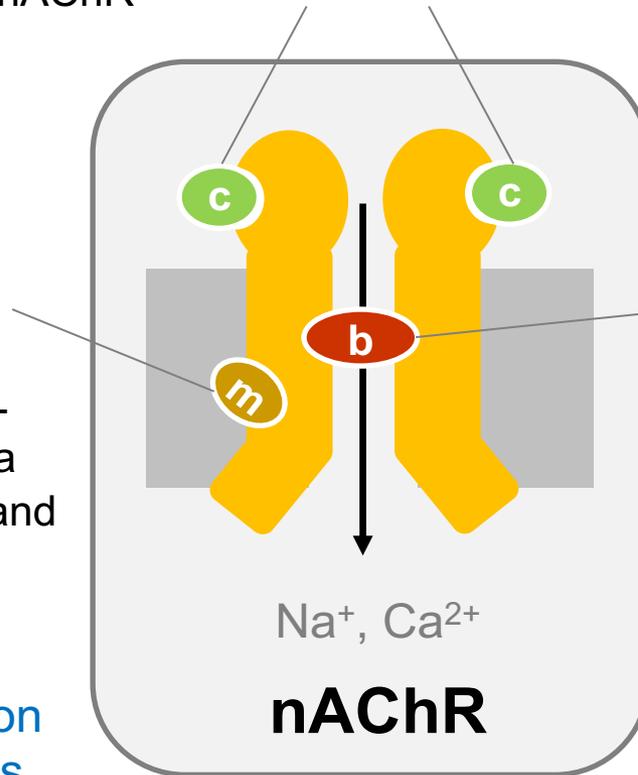
Can cause hyperexcitation and/or inhibitory paralysis

nAChR allosteric modulators

- Bind to the acetylcholine-opened channel form at a different (allosteric) site and keep channels open



Can cause hyperexcitation and contractive paralysis



nAChR channel blockers

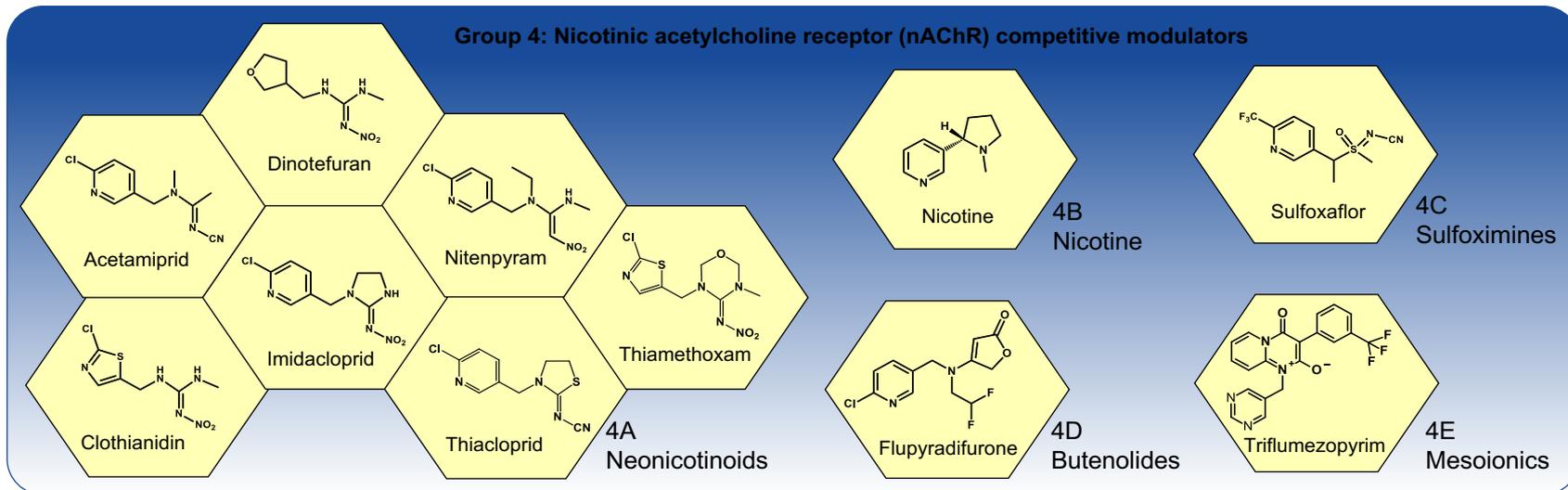
- Obstruct the pore and prevent ion flow
- prevent acetylcholine signal transduction



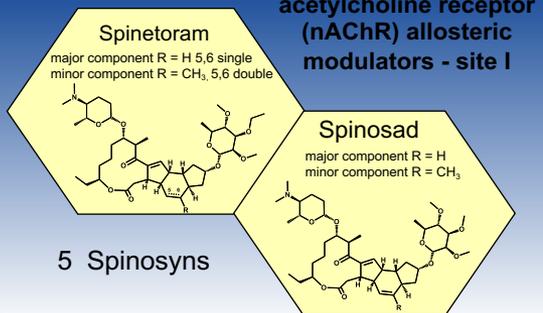
Can cause flaccid paralysis

Summary of Insecticides acting on nicotinic Acetylcholine receptors (nAChR)

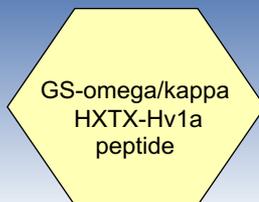
Group 4: Nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) competitive modulators



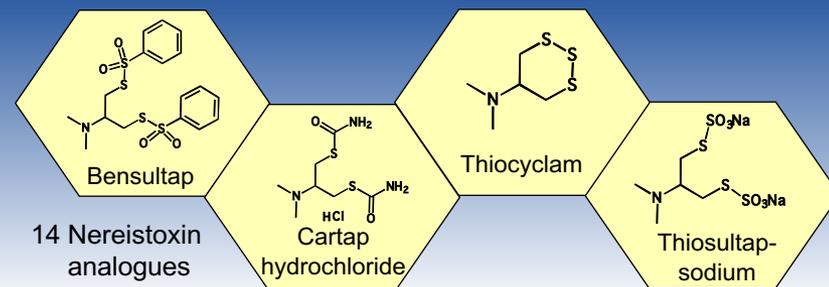
Group 5: Nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) allosteric modulators - site I



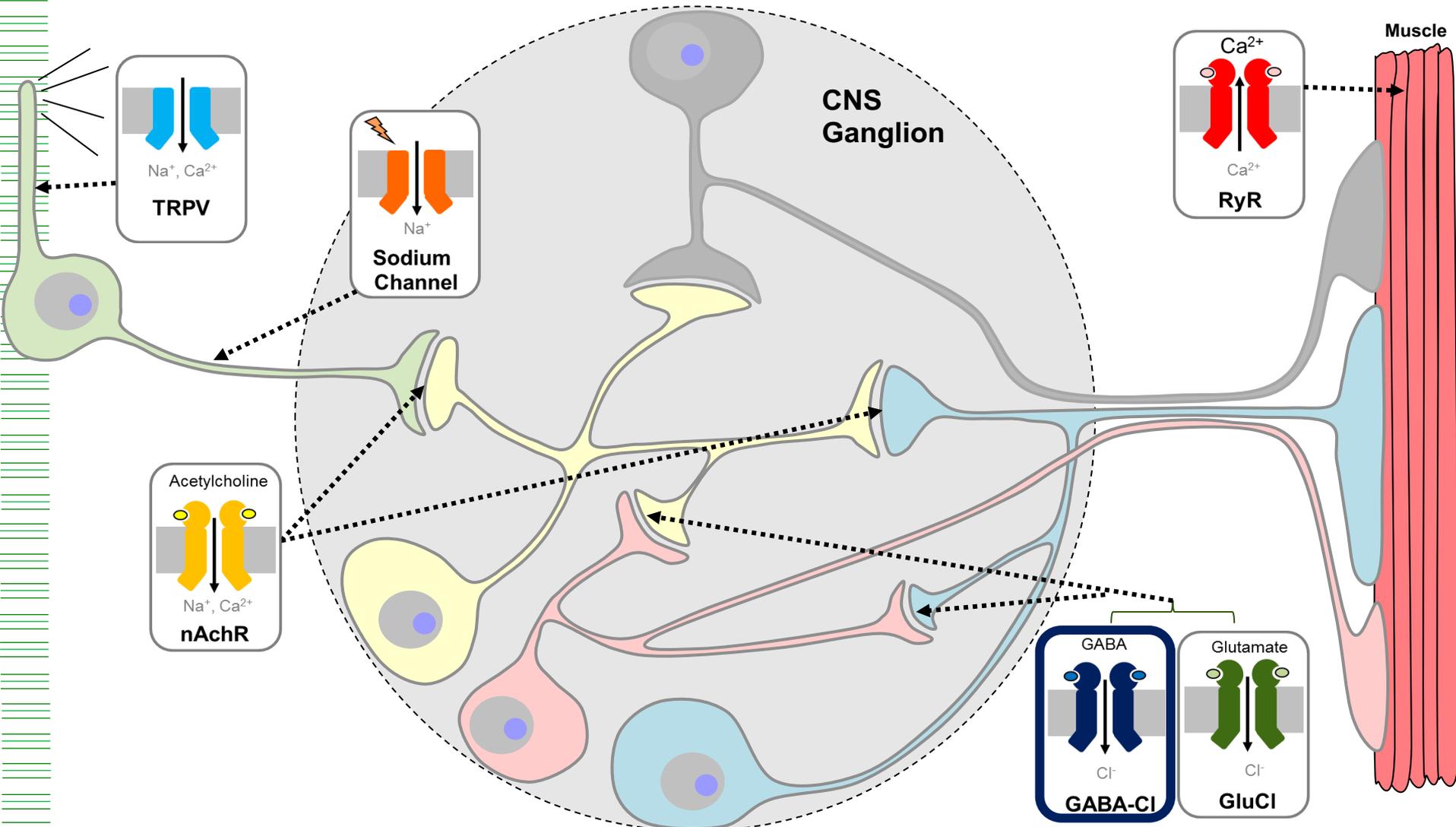
Group 32: Nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) allosteric modulators - site II



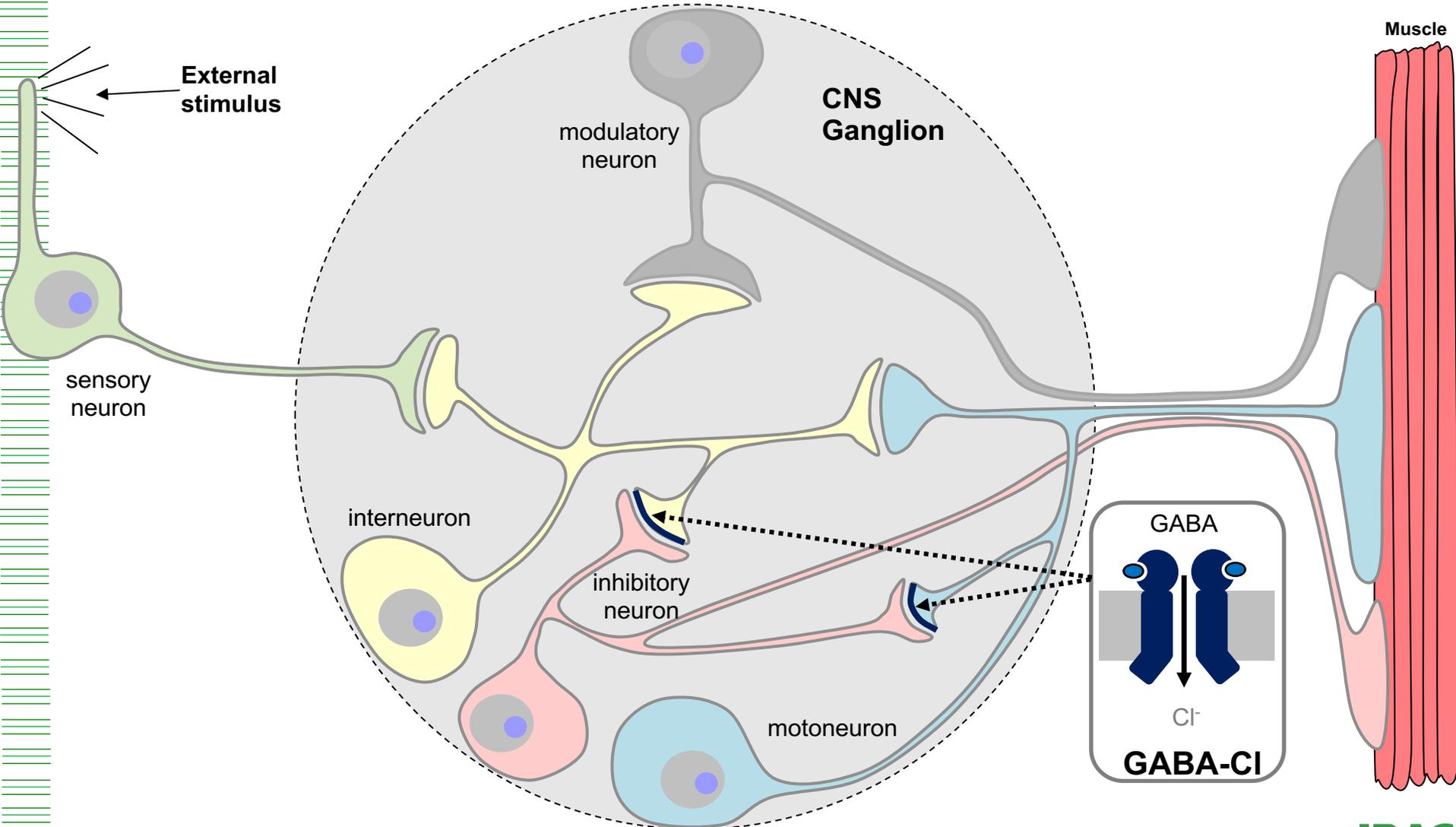
Group 14: Nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) channel blockers



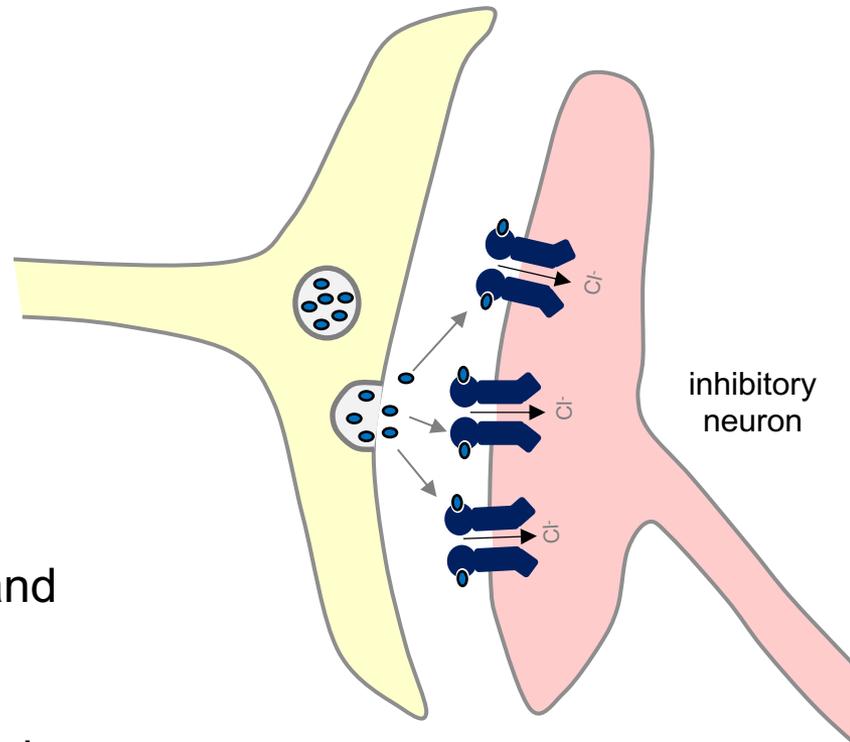
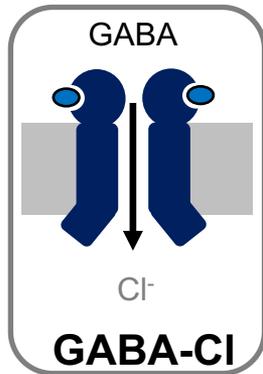
Overview of ion channels targeted by neuromuscular disruptors



Insecticides acting on GABA-gated chloride channels (GABA-Cl)



Insecticides acting on GABA-gated chloride channels (GABA-Cl)

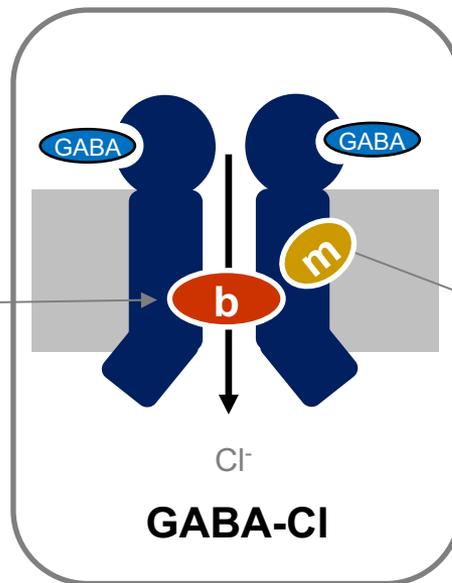


- GABA is a major **inhibitory neurotransmitter** in the CNS and neuromuscular synapses
- Influx of the negatively charged Cl⁻ ions has an inhibitory effect, counteracting excitatory signals

Insecticides acting on GABA-gated chloride channel (GABA-Cl)

GABA-Cl antagonists

- Block the pore and prevent chloride influx, interfering with the channel's inhibitory function

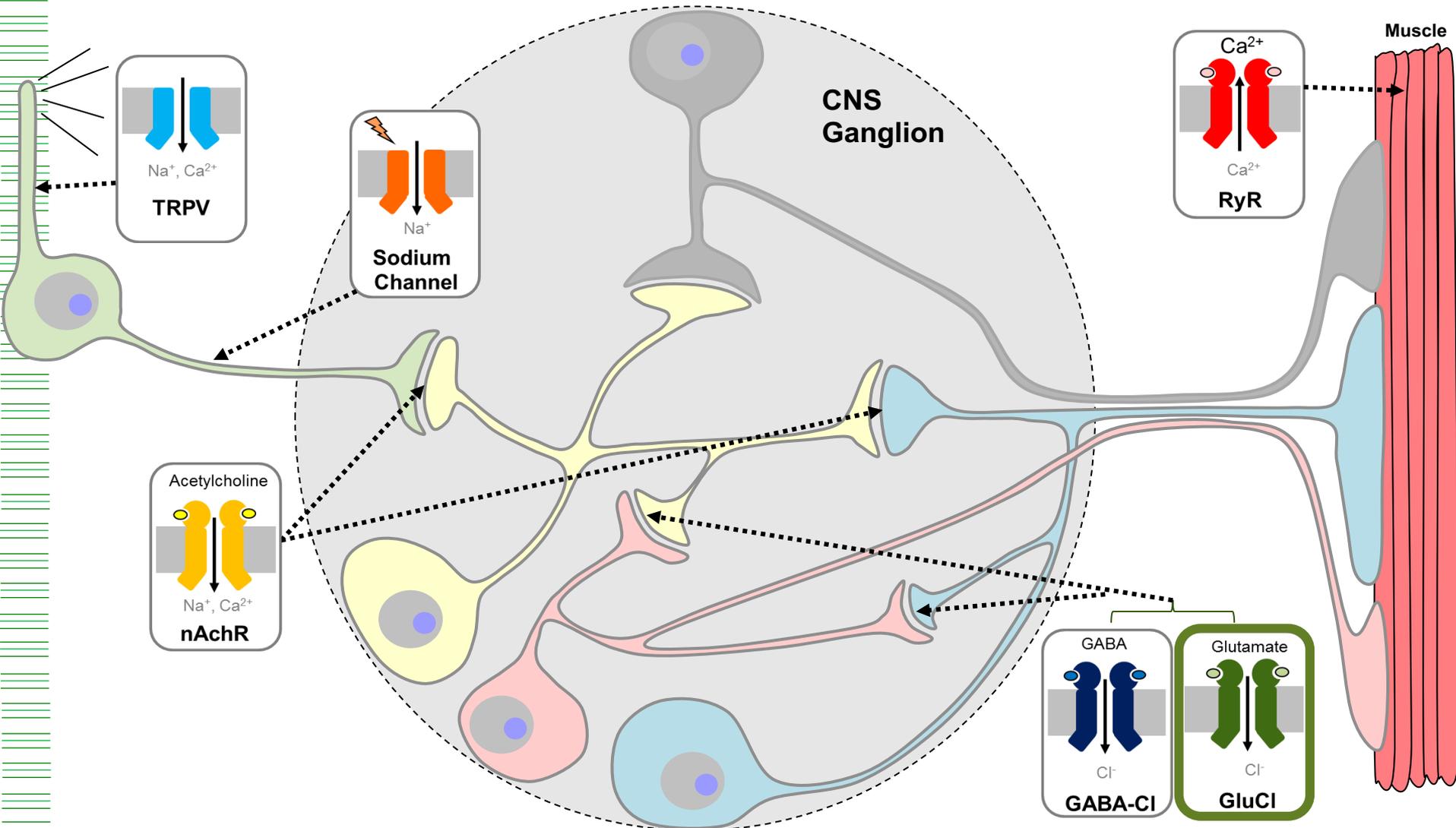


GABA-Cl allosteric modulators

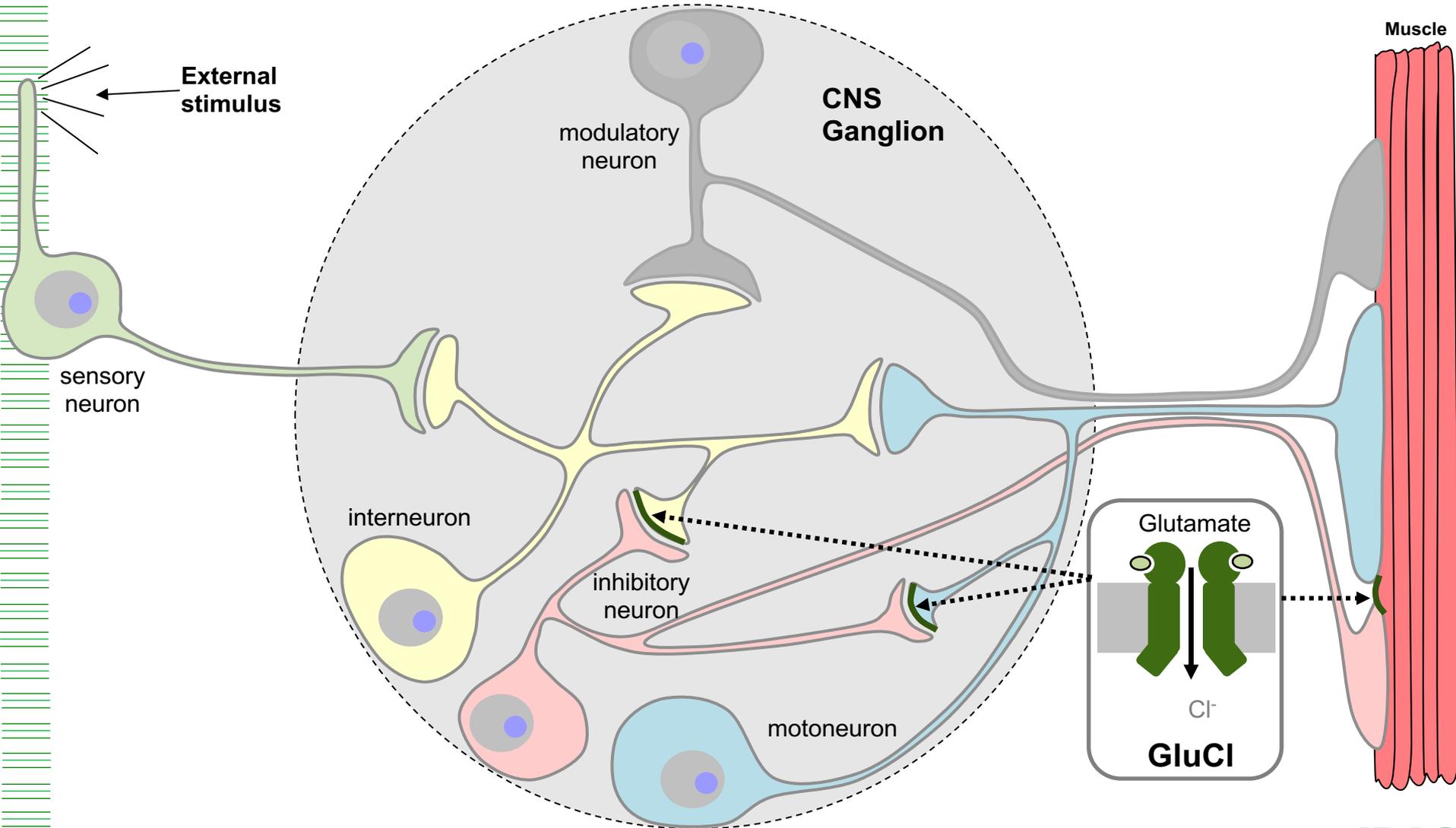
- Binding of modulators negatively affects GABA-Cl, interfering with the channel's inhibitory function

Pore blockers and negative modulators both cause **convulsions** and **death**

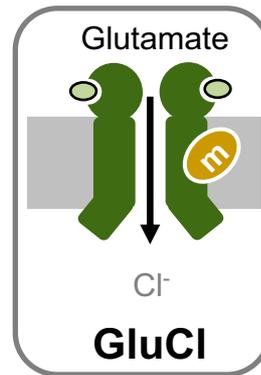
Overview of ion channels targeted by neuromuscular disruptors



Insecticides acting on Glutamate-gated chloride channels (GluCl)



Allosteric modulators of Glutamate-gated chloride channels (GluCl)

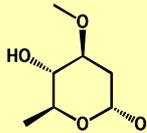


- **Inhibitory** Glutamate-gated chloride channels (GluCl) are widespread on insect nerve and muscle cells and likely function in inhibitory neurotransmission
- GluCl modulators activate chloride influx, causing **flaccid paralysis**

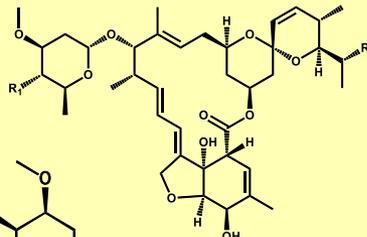
Allosteric modulators of Glutamate-gated chloride channels (GluCl)

Group 6: Glutamate-gated chloride channel (GluCl) allosteric modulators

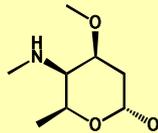
Abamectin R1 =



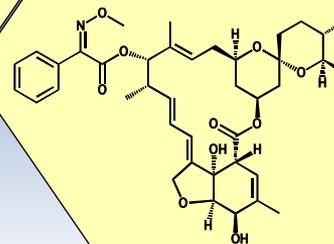
major component R2 = Ethyl
minor component R2 = Methyl



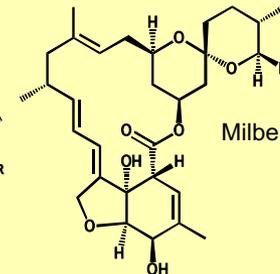
Emamectin
benzoate R1 =



Lepimectin



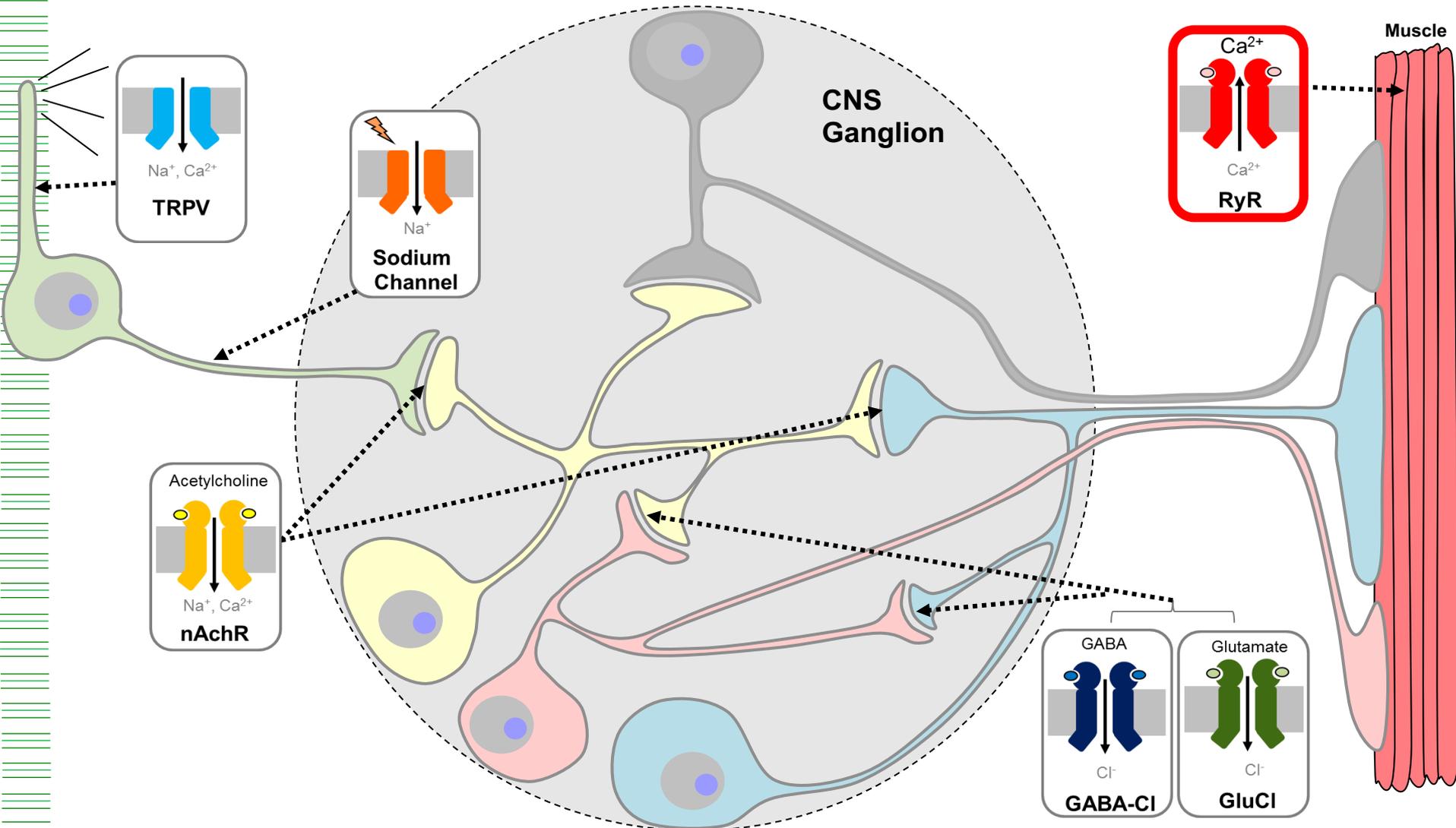
Milbemectin



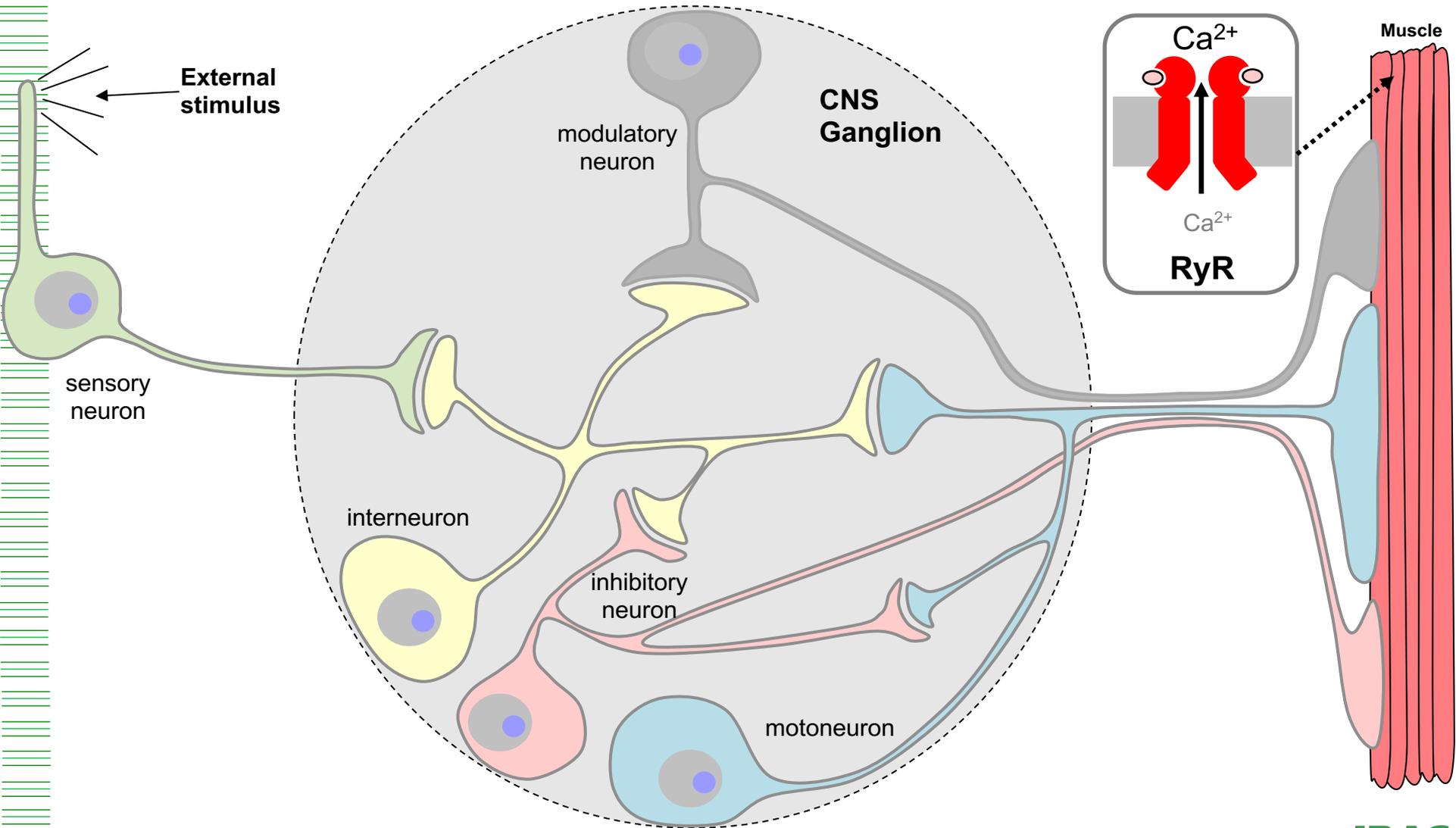
major component R = Ethyl
minor component R = Methyl

6 Avermectins & Milbemectins

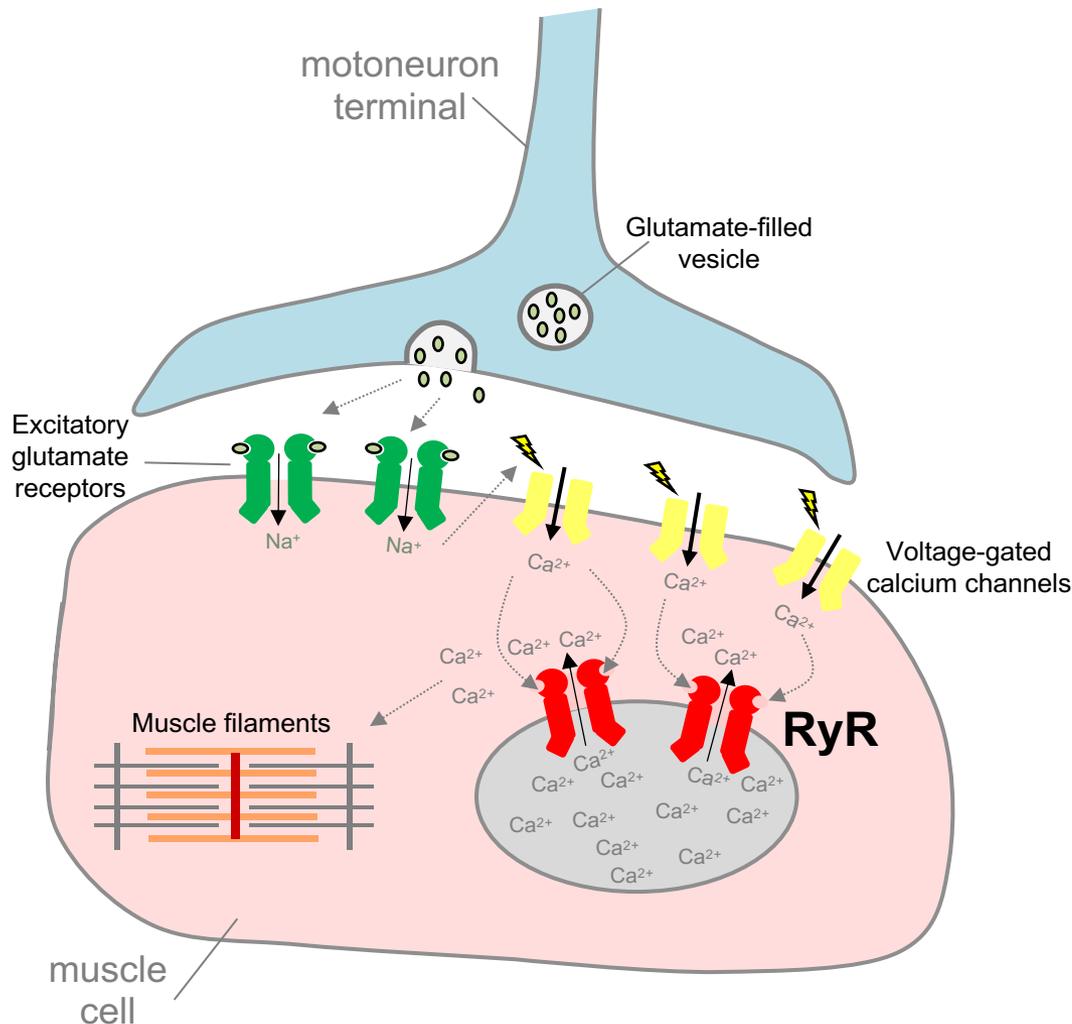
Overview of ion channels targeted by neuromuscular disruptors



Insecticides acting on the Ryanodine Receptor (RyR)



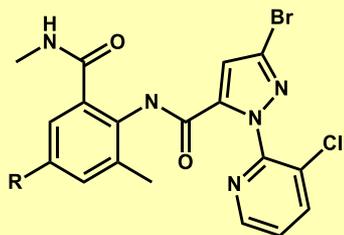
The Ryanodine receptor (RyR) plays a crucial role in insect muscle contraction



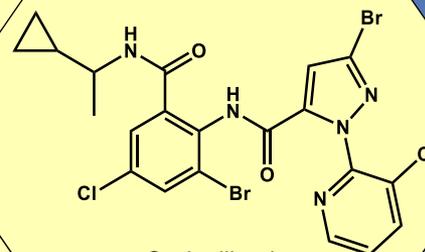
- Ca²⁺ ions entering the muscle cell activate RyR located on the muscle cell's intracellular Ca²⁺ store to release Ca²⁺ into the cytoplasm
- The rise in Ca²⁺ activates more RyRs, leading to massive Ca²⁺ release
- This in turn induces shortening of contractile filaments, leading to muscle cell contraction
- RyR modulators open the ryanodine receptor independent of cytoplasmic calcium levels causing uncontrolled muscle contraction, paralysis and death

RyR modulators

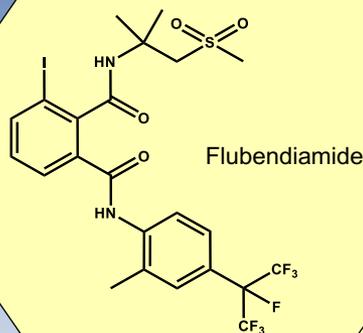
Group 28: Ryanodine receptor modulators



Chlorantraniliprole R=Cl
Cyantraniliprole R=CN



Cyclaniliprole



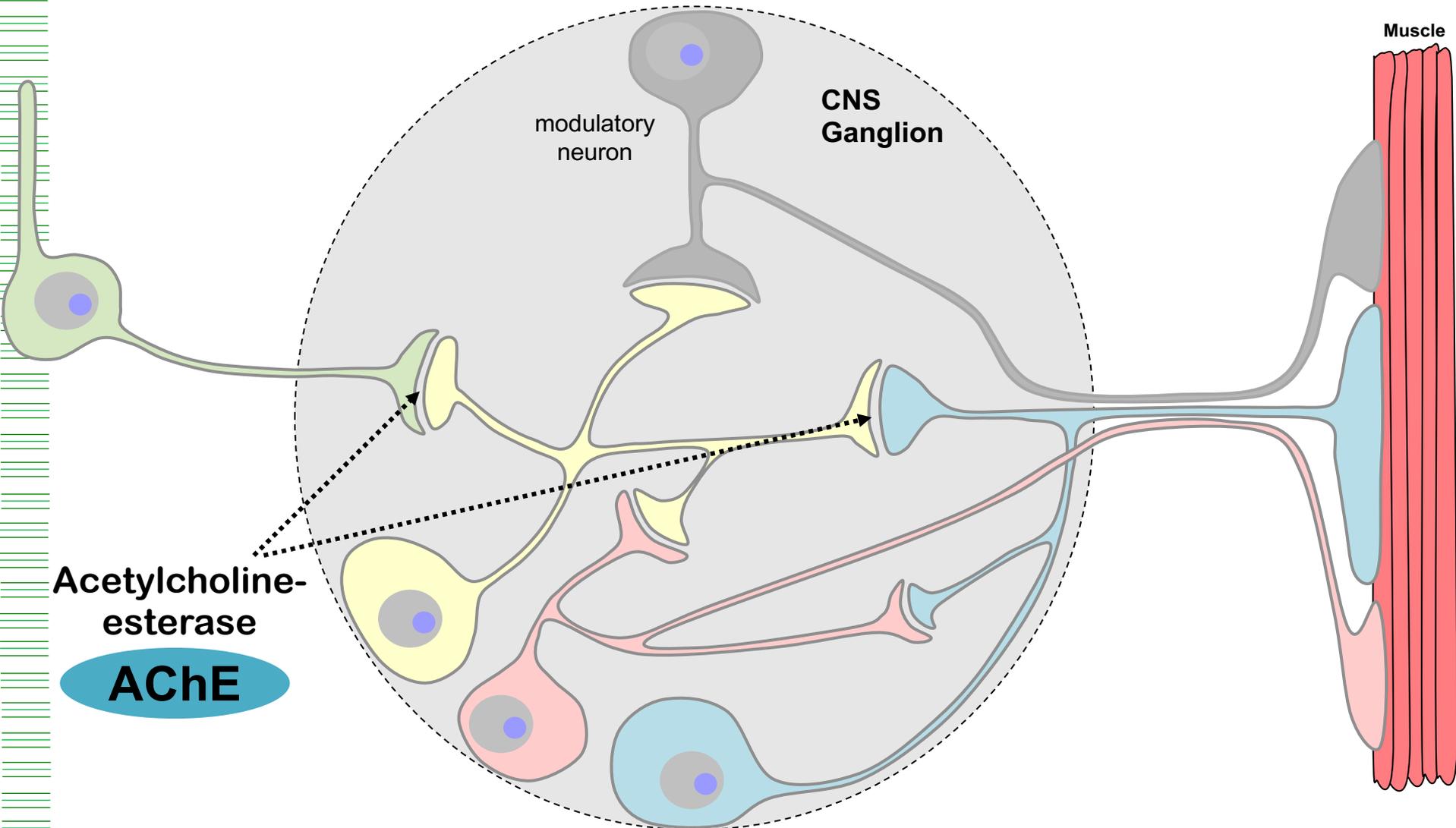
Flubendiamide



Tetraniliprole

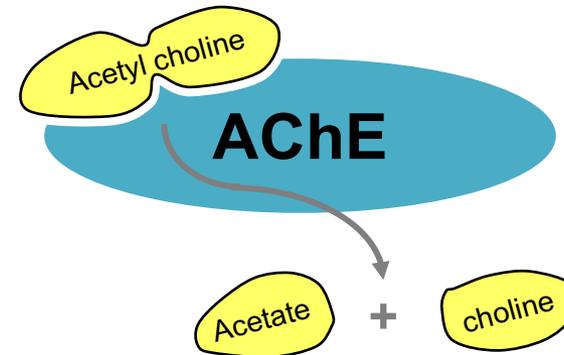
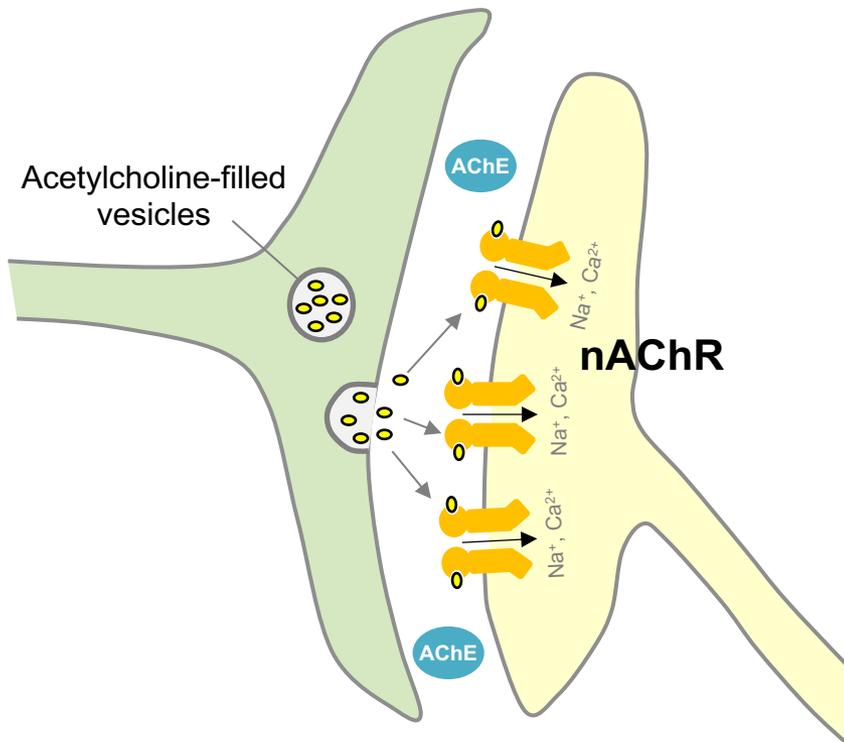
28 Diamides

Enzymes targeted by neuromuscular disruptors

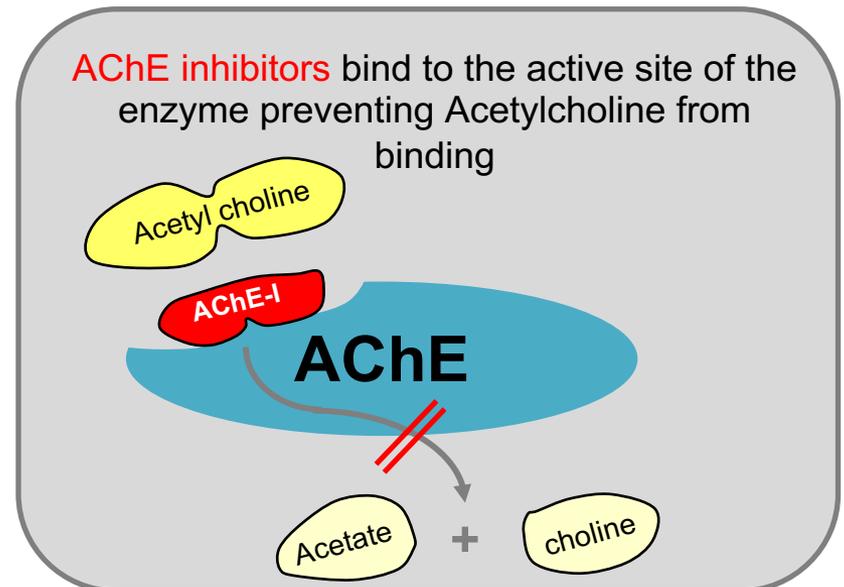


Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) degrades Acetylcholine in the synapse

Acetylcholinesterases degrade **Acetylcholine** in order to terminate the signal after it has been sent across the synapse

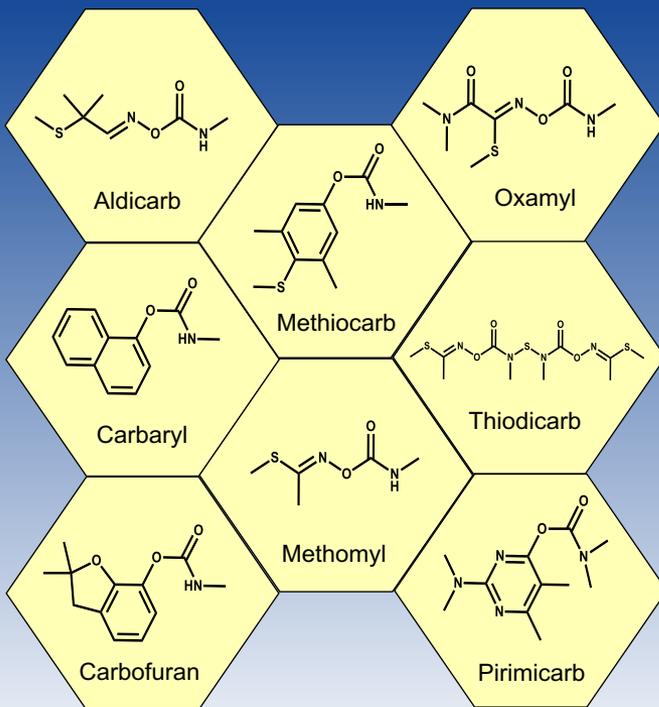


AChE inhibitors bind to the active site of the enzyme preventing Acetylcholine from binding

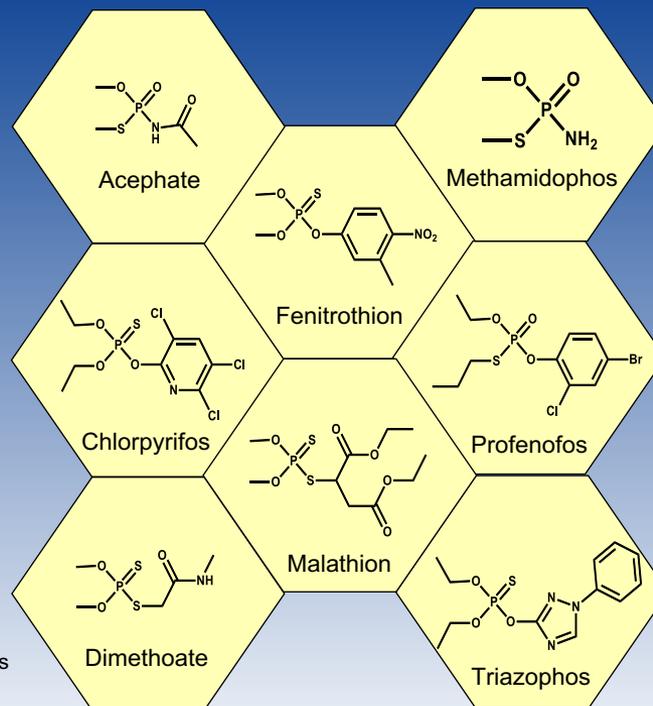


Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) inhibitors

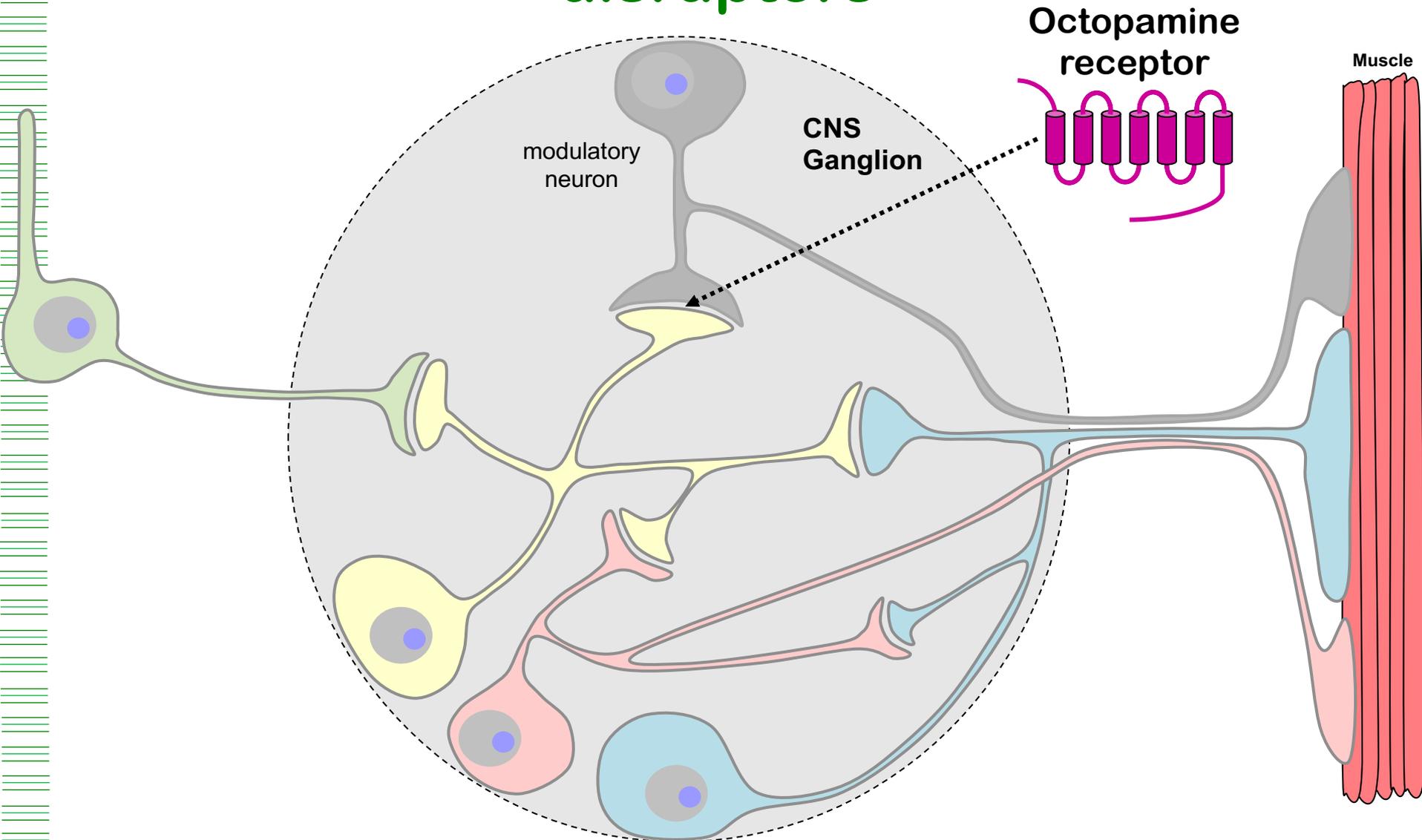
Group 1: Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) inhibitors



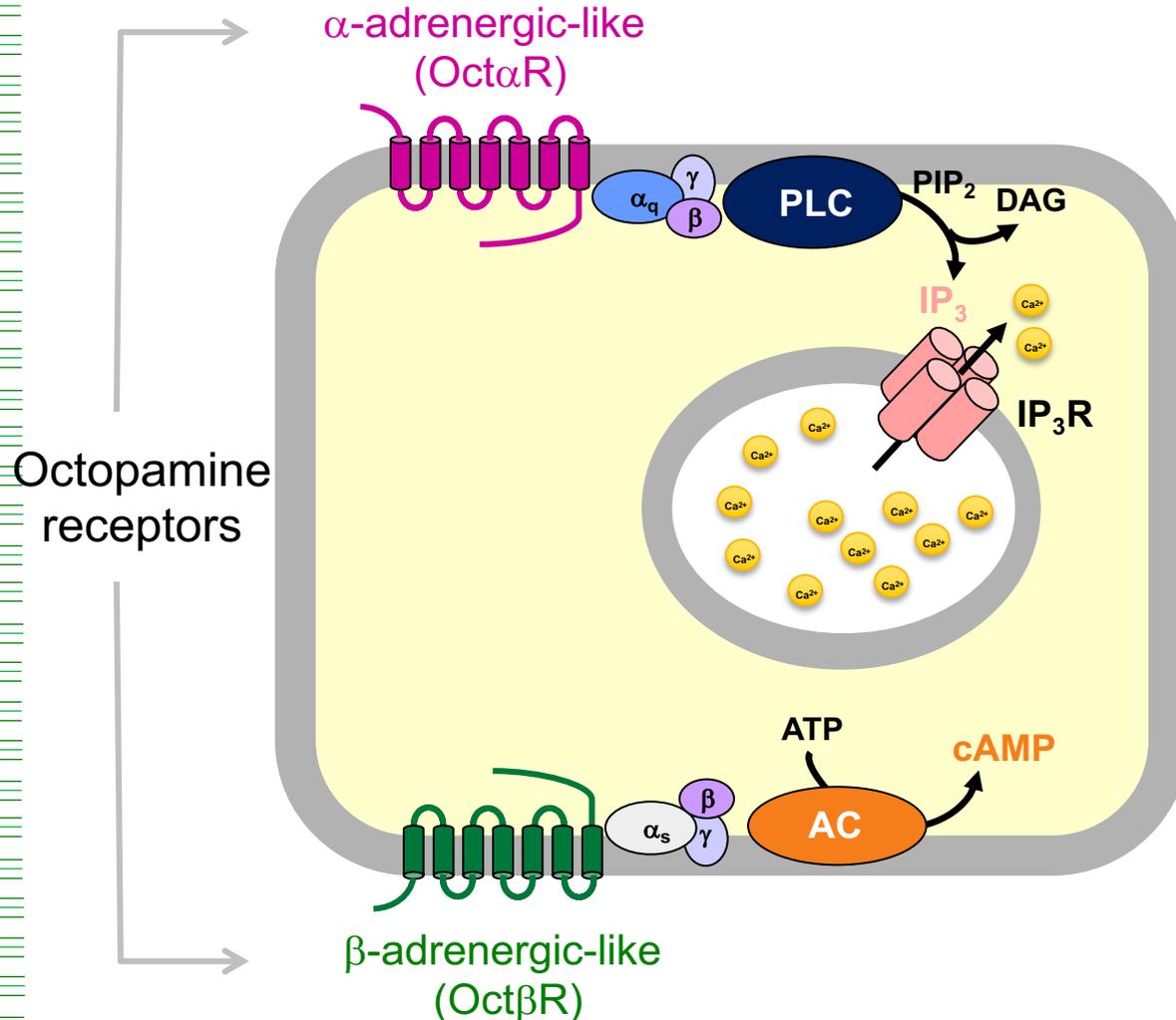
(Only major representatives of the groups are shown)



Receptors targeted by neuromuscular disruptors

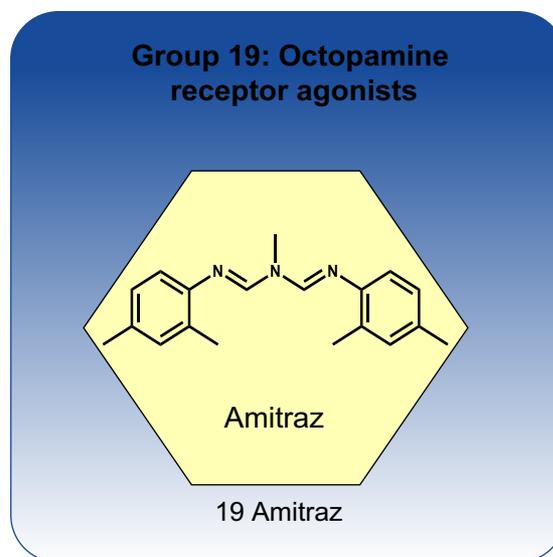


Octopamine receptor signalling

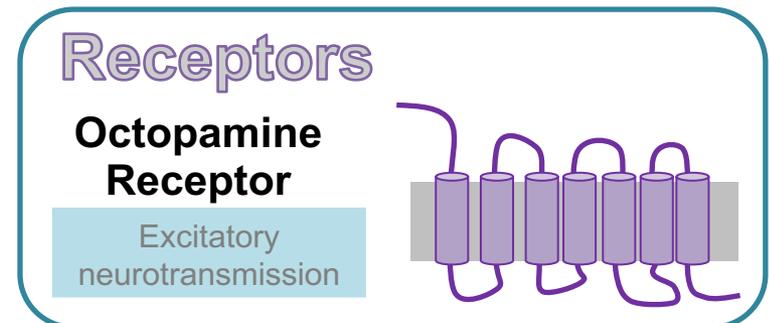
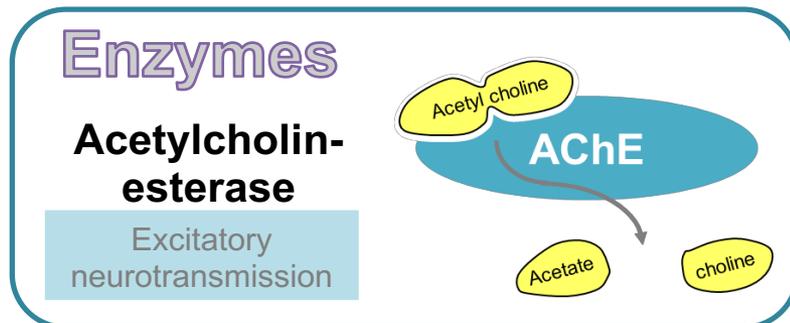
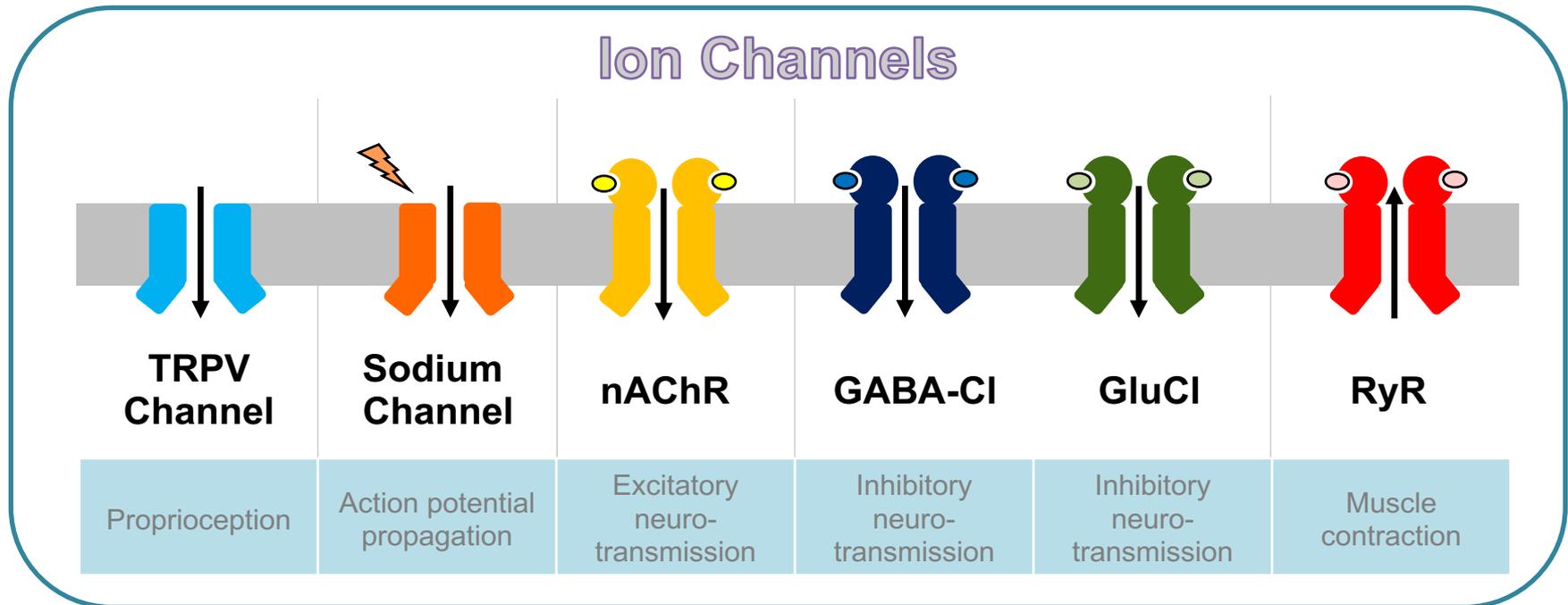


- Octopamine is the major modulatory neurotransmitter in insects; it can increase the general level of arousal like adrenaline does in mammals
- Upon release, Octopamine binds to G-protein-coupled Receptors (GPCRs) on the postsynaptic membrane, which can be coupled via G-proteins ($\alpha\beta\gamma$) to Phospholipase C (PLC), an enzyme catalyzing the formation of IP₃, which in turn can activate intracellular Ca²⁺ release channels. Other octopamine receptors are coupled to adenylyl cyclase (AC) to stimulate cAMP production
- Octopamine receptor agonists can mimic the action of this neurotransmitter

Octopamine receptor agonists



Targets of Neuromuscular Disruptors & Their key Physiological Roles



Insecticide Mode of Action

Major classes



Nerve & Muscle



Growth



Respiration



Midgut



Unknown or Non-Specific

Growth & Development Disruptors Background

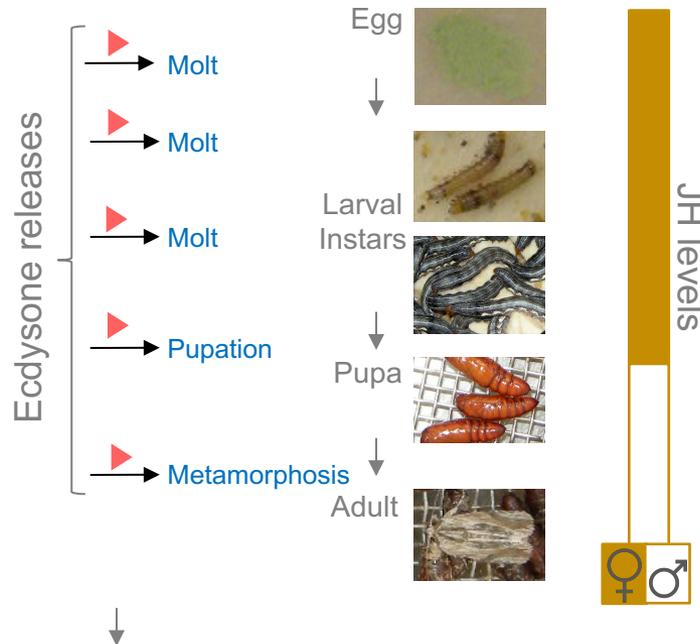
The insect's skeleton is external (**exoskeleton**) and contains chitin. Since the exoskeleton cannot expand, it must be replaced with a larger one by the process of molting as the insect grows, requiring **chitin synthesis**. Molting is under strict hormonal control:

Ecdysone

Juvenile Hormone (JH)

Ecdysone is released by the prothoracic gland in the thorax

Pulses of Ecdysone induce molting



JH prevents molting to a more mature stage

JH production stops during metamorphosis

Targets of Growth & Development Disruptors

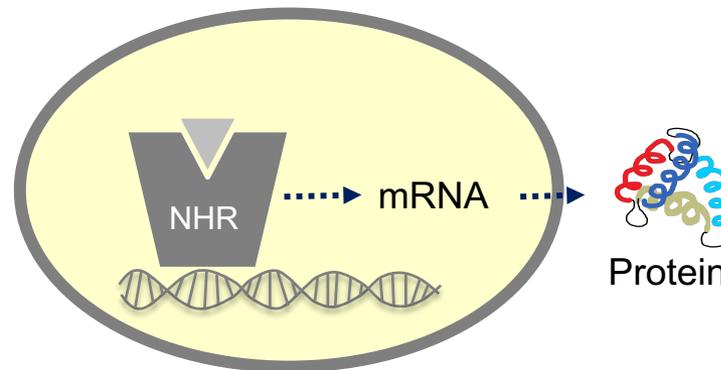
1. Nuclear Hormone Receptors (NHR)

Ecdysone Receptor



Pulses of Ecdysone induce molting

NHRs alter the expression of genes needed for ecdysis (**EcR**) or to form adult structures (**JHR**)



Juvenile Hormone Receptor



JH prevents molting to a more mature stage

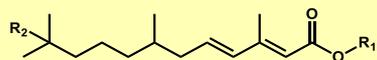
EcR agonists directly and persistently activate Ecdysone receptors causing the insect to go into a precocious, incomplete molt, leading eventually to death

JH mimics activate the JH receptor and strongly suppress the development of adult characteristics keeping the insect in an 'immature' state

Juvenile hormone mimics

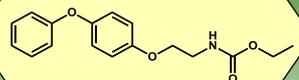
Group 7: Juvenile hormone mimics

Hydroprene R1 = ethyl, R2 = H
Methoprene R1 = isopropyl, R2 = OCH₃



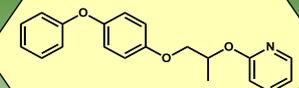
Kinoprene R1 = propargyl, R2 = H

7A Juvenile hormone analogues



Fenoxycarb

7B Fenoxycarb

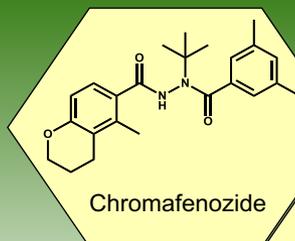


Pyriproxyfen

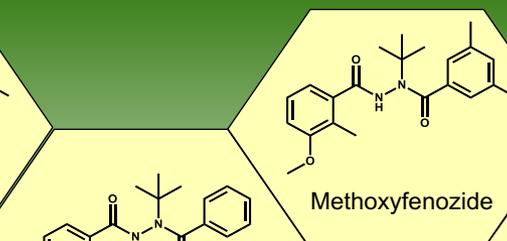
7C Pyriproxyfen

Ecdysone receptor agonists

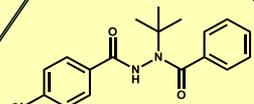
Group 18: Ecdysone receptor agonists



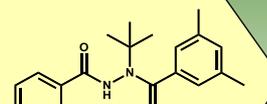
Chromafenozide



Methoxyfenozide



Halofenozide

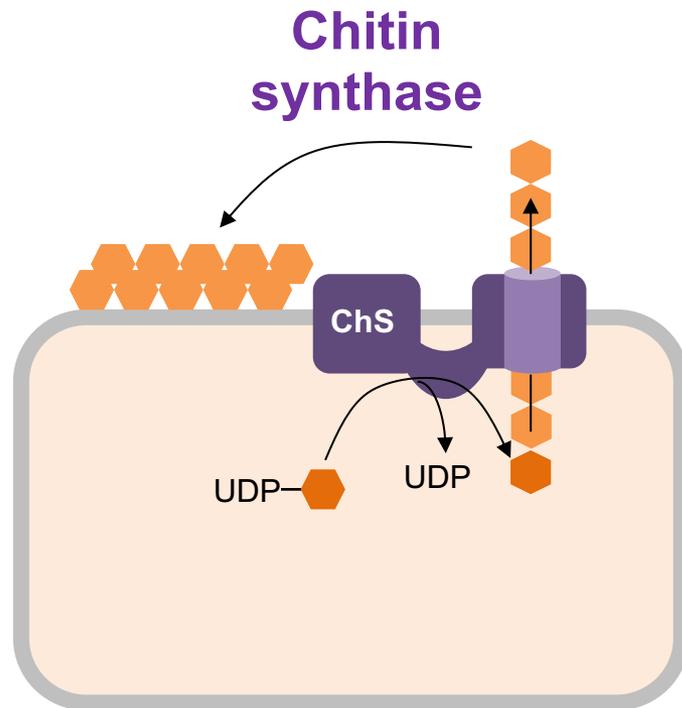


Tebufenozide

18 Diacylhydrazines

Targets of Growth & Development Disruptors

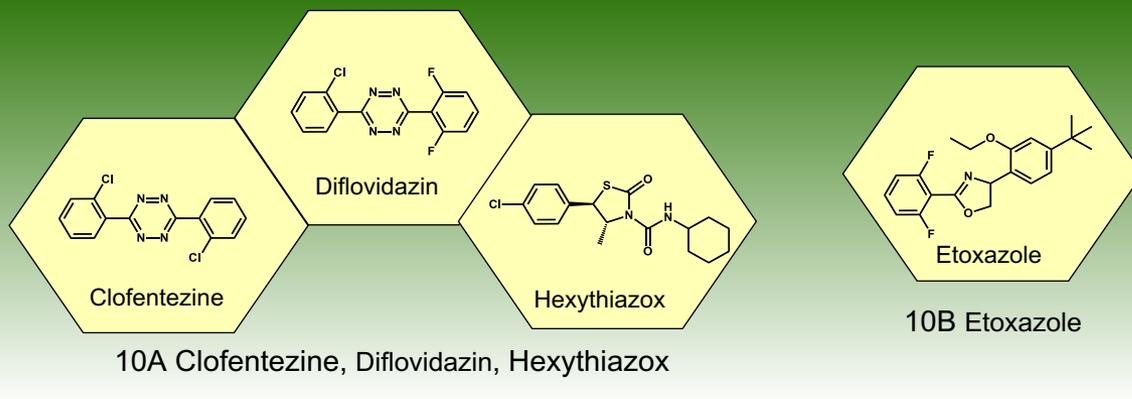
2. Chitin Synthesis Inhibitors



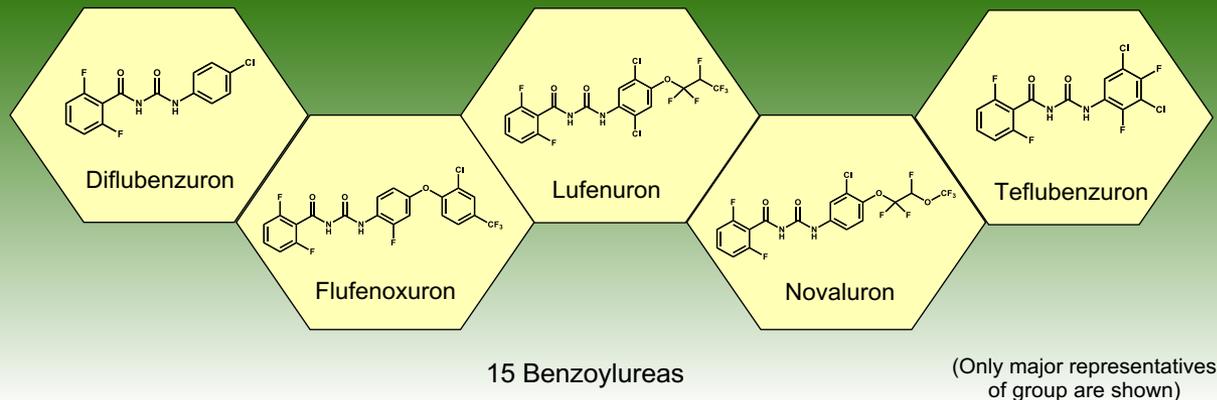
- Chitin is a polymer of N-Acetyl glucosamine (NAGlc; )
- Chitin synthase uses activated NAGlc (UDP-NAGlc; UDP-) to extend the growing chitin chain
- The nascent chain is released into the extracellular space
- Interfering with chitin synthesis results in a weak and soft exoskeleton as well as deformed appendages and sexual organs

Chitin synthesis inhibitors

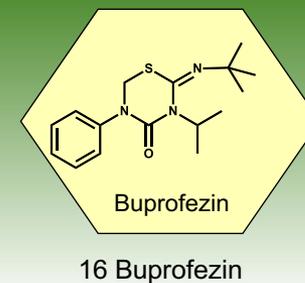
Group 10: Mite growth inhibitors affecting CHS1



Group 15: Inhibitors of chitin biosynthesis affecting CHS1

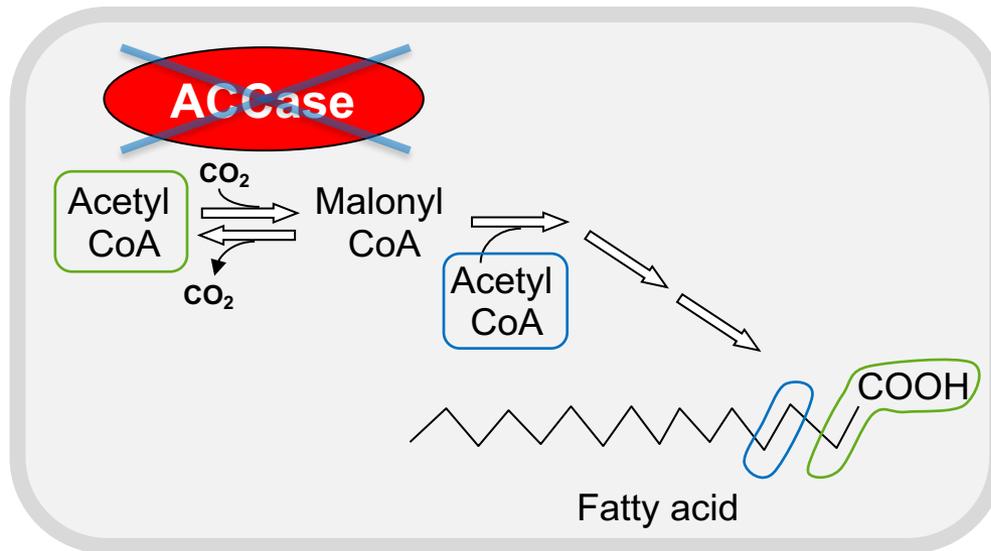


Group 16: Inhibitors of chitin biosynthesis, type 1



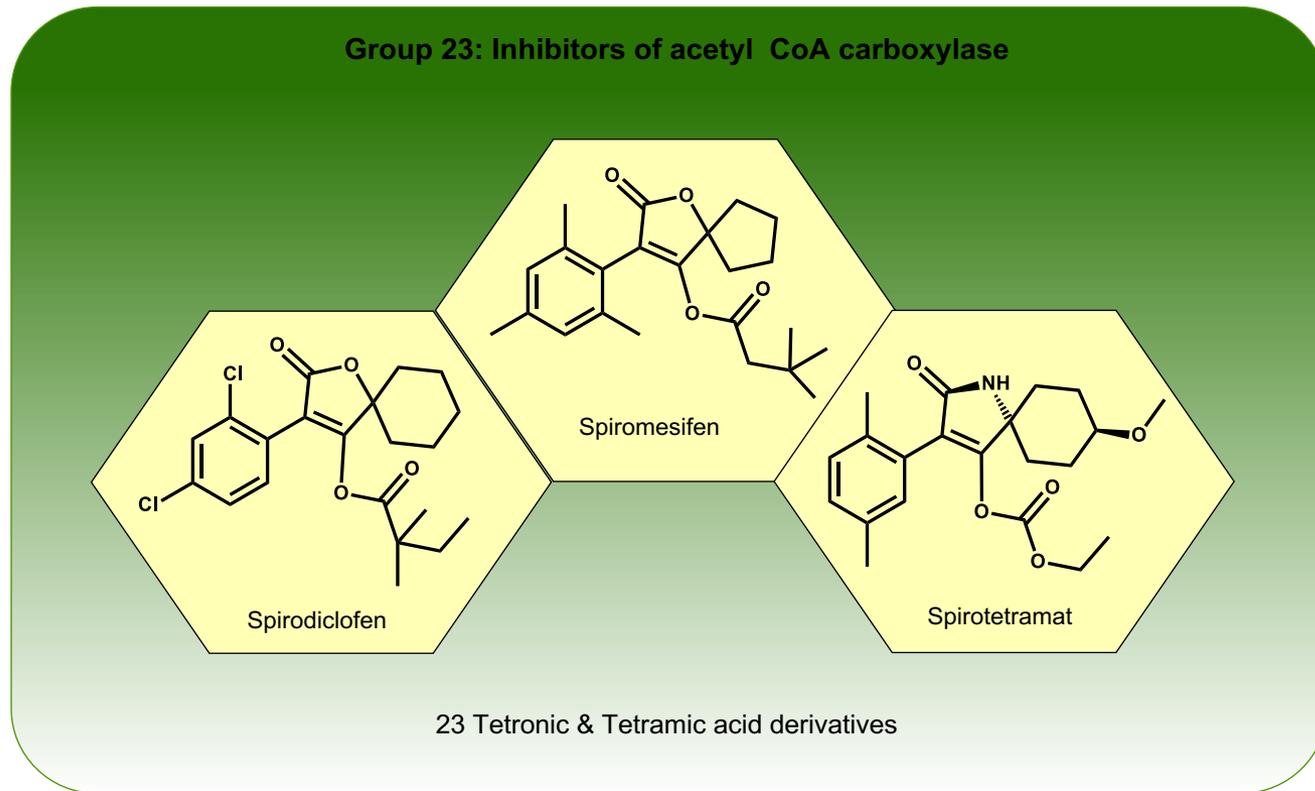
Targets of Growth & Development Disruptors

3. ACCase Inhibitors



- ACCase (acetyl CoA carboxylase) catalyzes the first and rate-limiting step of fatty acid biosynthesis
- **ACCase inhibitors** prevent biosynthesis of fats needed for growth and development resulting in incomplete molts and desiccation of the insect

Inhibitors of acetyl CoA carboxylase



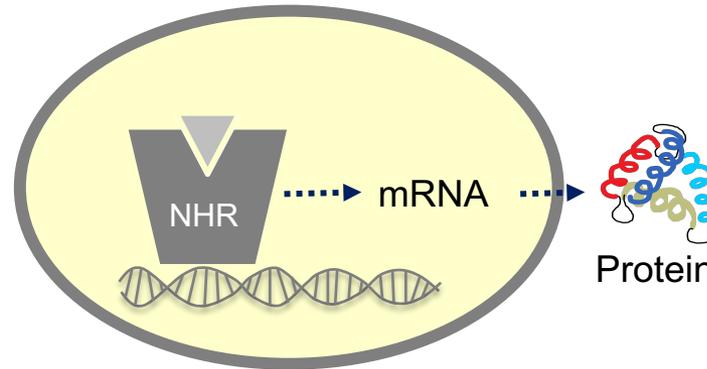
Overview Growth & Development Targets

Nuclear Hormone Receptors

Ecdysone Receptor



Pulses of Ecdysone induce molting



NHRs alter the expression of genes needed for ecdysis (EcR) or to form adult structures (JHR)

Juvenile Hormone Receptor

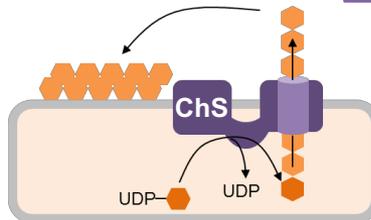


JH prevents molting to a more mature stage

Enzymes

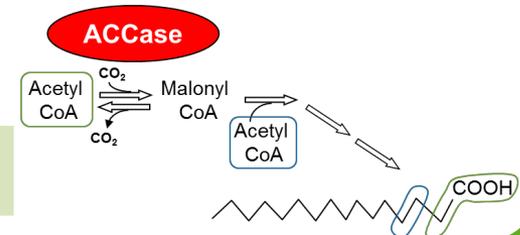
Chitin synthase

Chitin synthesis



Acetyl CoA carboxylase

Fatty acid synthesis



Insecticide Mode of Action

Major classes



Nerve & Muscle



Growth



Respiration



Midgut

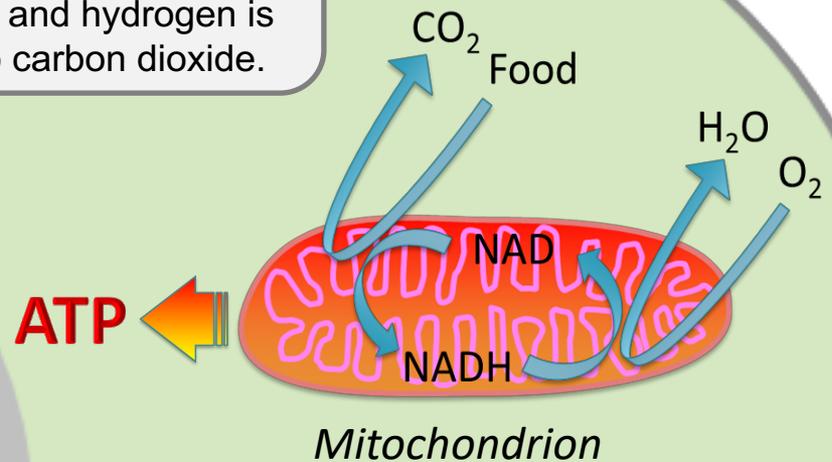


Unknown or Non-Specific

Respiration and Energy Conservation Background

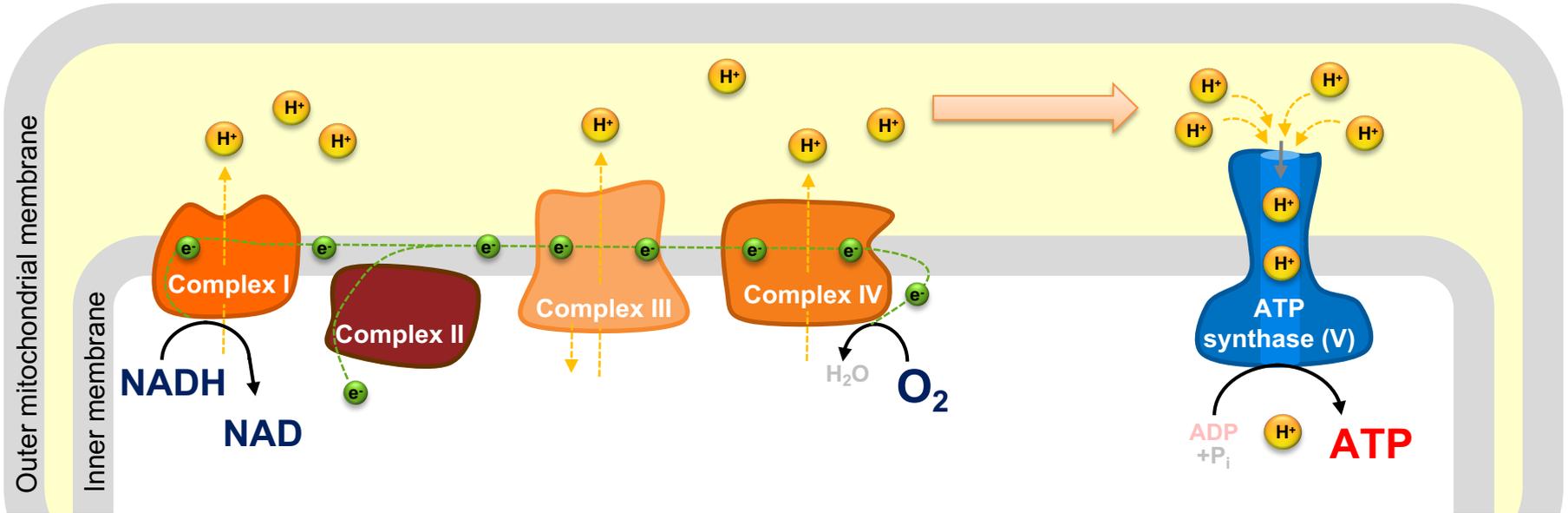
Cells get the energy they need by "oxidizing" food such as fat and sugars to produce carbon dioxide and water. In the cell this process is conducted in many steps in which oxygen is added to the fuel (from water) and hydrogen is removed so that the fuel is converted to carbon dioxide.

The hydrogen is removed by adding it to NAD (a form of vitamin B3) forming NADH. The regeneration of NAD requires oxygen, produces water and releases a lot of energy.



Most of these steps are contained in a special part of the cell called the mitochondrion. The mitochondrion has a closed membrane system that allows the energy released to be captured by generating ATP which fuels many cellular processes.

A number of complex proteins are needed to conserve the energy available



NADH oxidation at **Complex I** is dependent on an **electron transfer chain** mostly contained within **Complex I**, **Complex III** and **Complex IV**

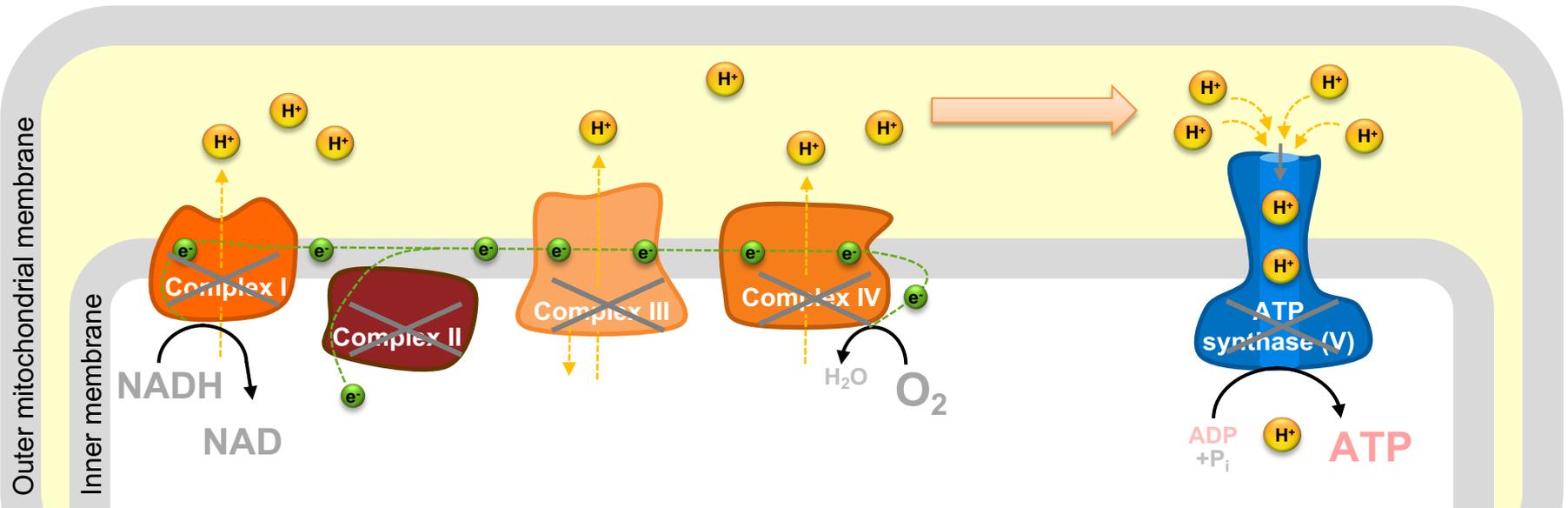
Electron flow e^- initiated by NADH oxidation drives consumption of oxygen at **Complex IV** and the pumping of protons H^+ across the membrane

The enzyme **ATP synthase** (Complex V) is driven by the proton gradient and catalyzes the formation of **ATP**

The enzyme **succinate dehydrogenase** (**Complex II**) feeds electrons into the chain and is also required for the overall process of food oxidation.

How insecticides interfere with cellular respiration:

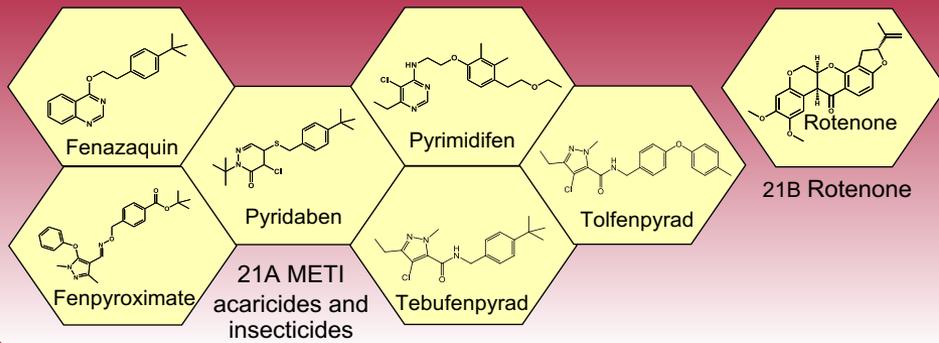
1. Inhibition of Complexes I-V



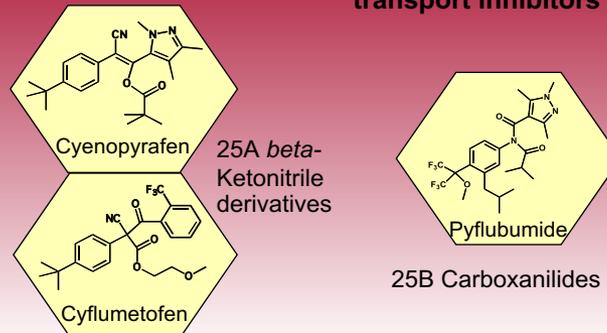
Inhibitors of one of the electron transport complexes I-IV or the mitochondrial ATP synthase (Complex V) **starve cells of energy** by preventing ATP formation, resulting in **paralysis**

Inhibitors of Complexes I-V

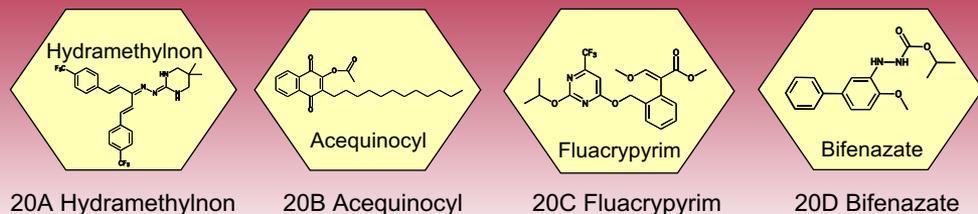
Group 21: Mitochondrial complex I electron transport inhibitors



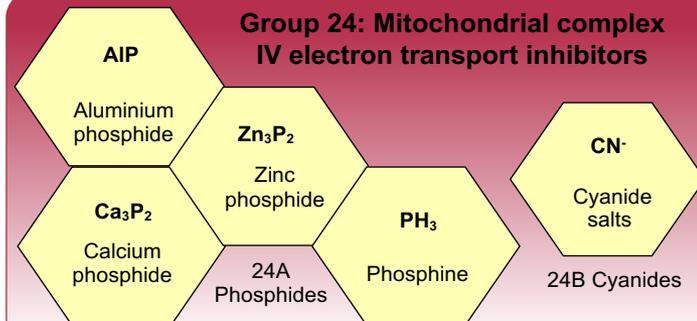
Group 25: Mitochondrial complex II electron transport inhibitors



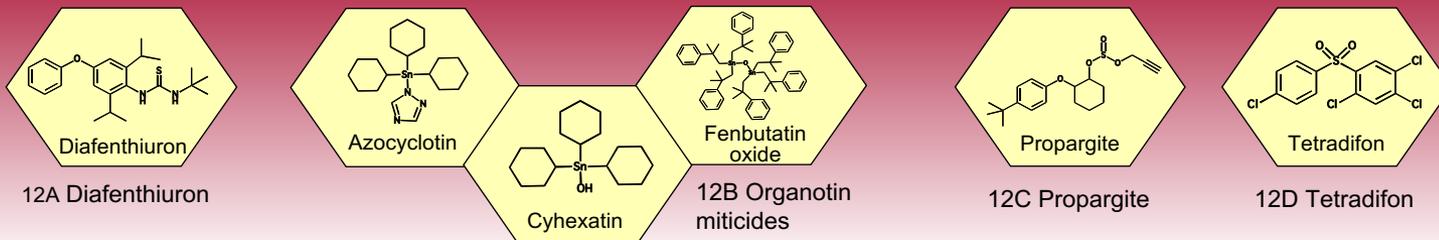
Group 20: Mitochondrial complex III electron transport inhibitors



Group 24: Mitochondrial complex IV electron transport inhibitors

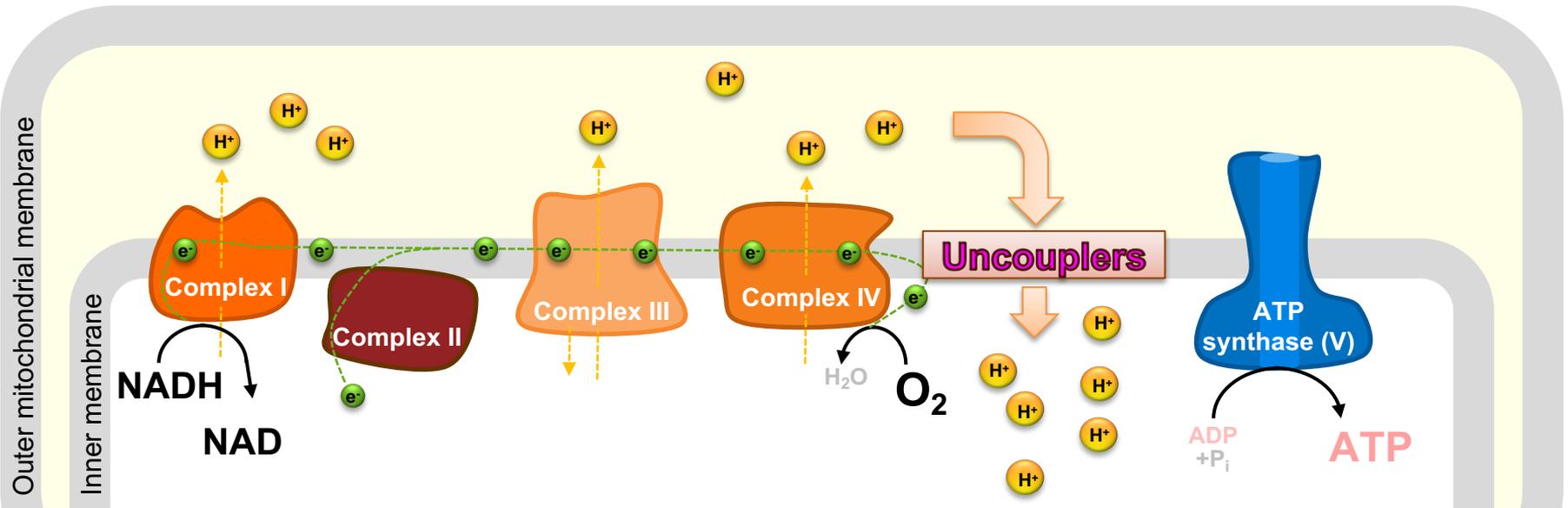


Group 12: Inhibitors of mitochondrial ATP synthase



How insecticides interfere with cellular respiration:

2. Uncoupling

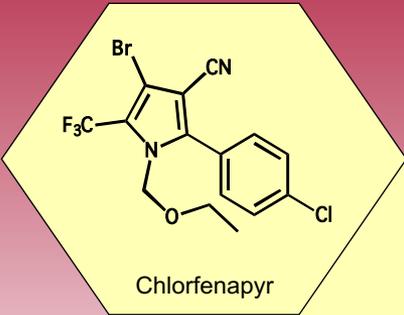


Uncouplers have the ability to carry protons across the inner mitochondrial membrane, thus removing the proton gradient

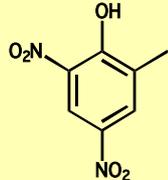
- ATP synthase is no longer able to provide cellular ATP
- O_2 consumption is accelerated

Uncouplers

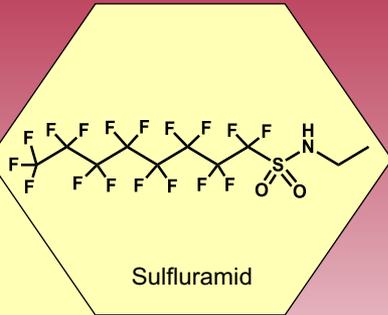
Group 13: Uncouplers of oxidative phosphorylation via disruption of proton gradient



Chlorfenapyr



DNOC



Sulfluramid

13 Pyrroles, Dinitrophenols, Sulfluramid

Insecticide Mode of Action

Major classes



Nerve & Muscle



Growth



Respiration



Midgut



Unknown or Non-Specific

The insect midgut as a target for insecticidal agents

Bacillus thuringiensis derived toxins

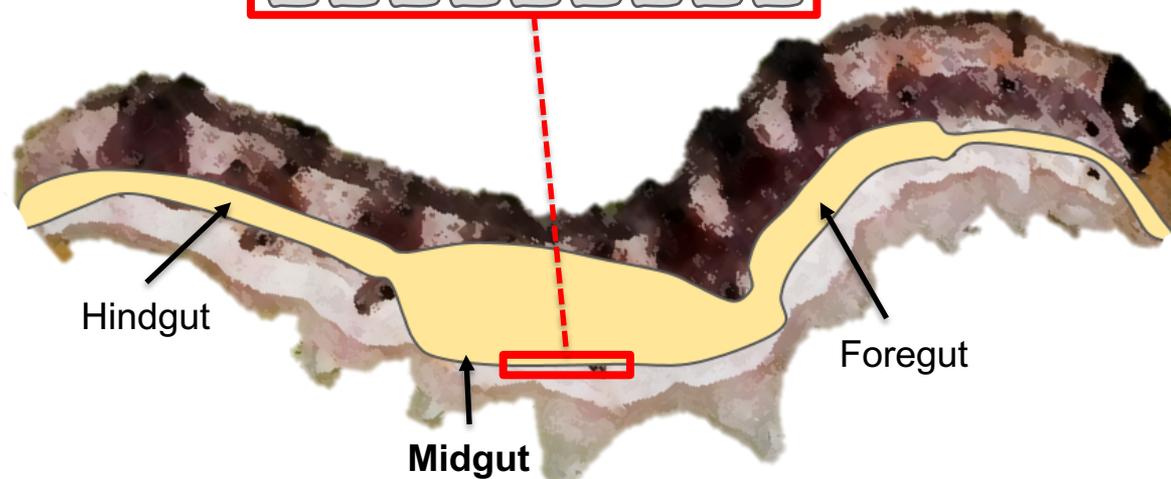
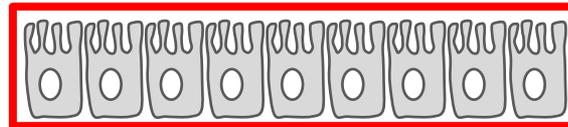


- Released in the insect midgut upon ingestion of 'packaged forms'
- Cause lysis of midgut epithelial cells via different mechanisms
- Result in loss of midgut integrity and ultimately death of the pest insect



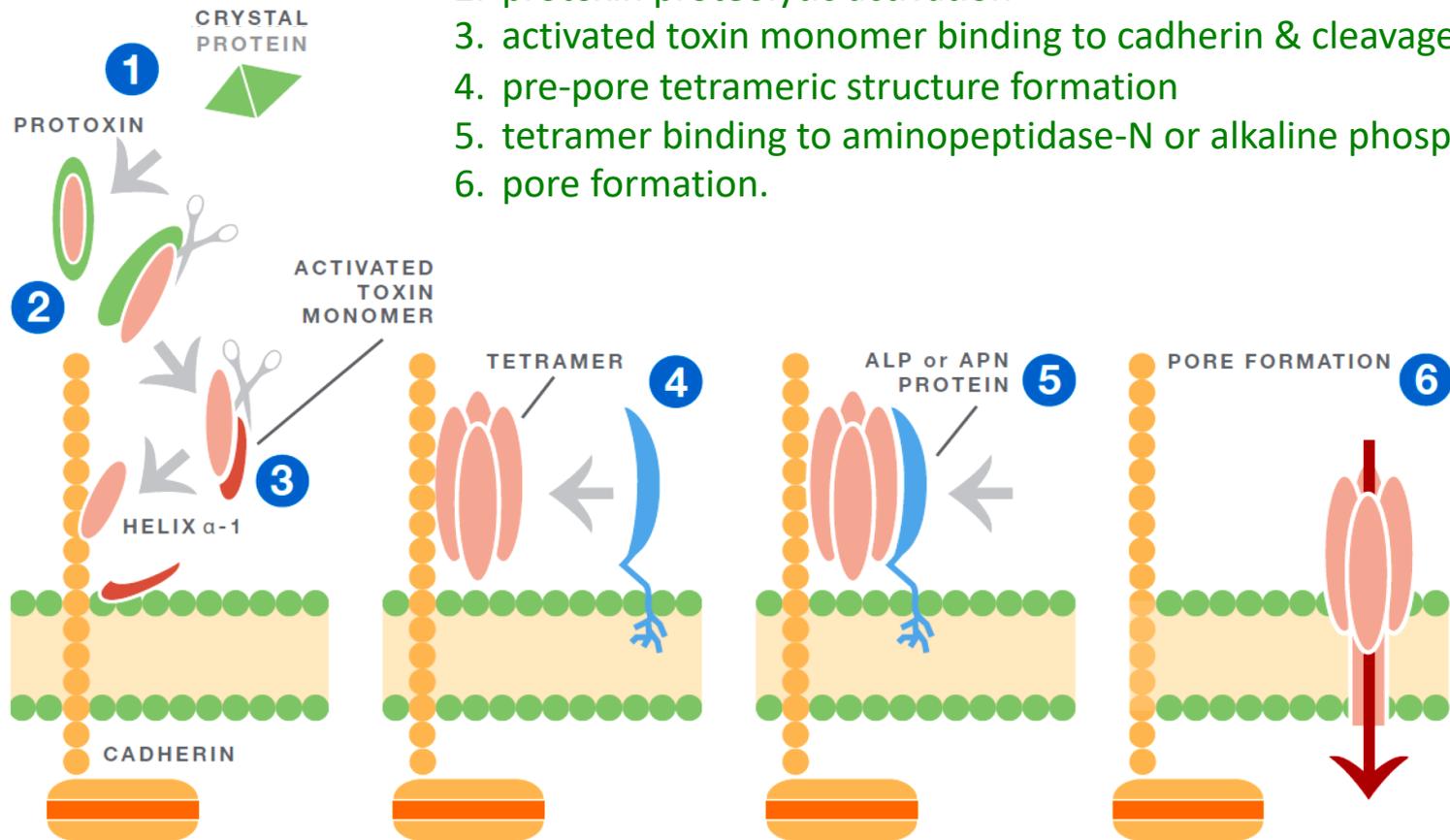
Baculoviruses

Midgut cells



Mode of Action of *Bacillus thuringiensis* Cry Toxins on Midgut Epithelium

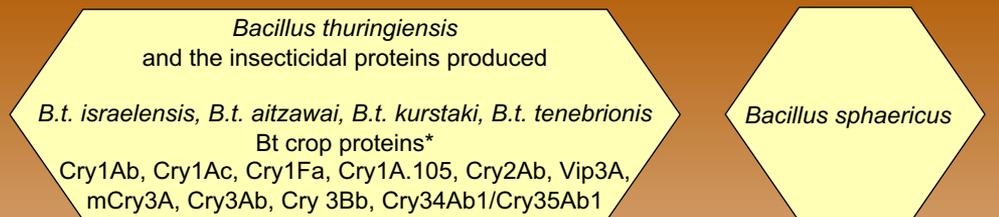
1. crystal solubilization
2. protoxin proteolytic activation
3. activated toxin monomer binding to cadherin & cleavage of helix α -1
4. pre-pore tetrameric structure formation
5. tetramer binding to aminopeptidase-N or alkaline phosphatase
6. pore formation.



Microbial disruptors of insect midgut

Group 11: Microbial disruptors of insect midgut membranes

{ Includes transgenic crops expressing *Bacillus thuringiensis* toxins (however, specific guidance for resistance management of transgenic crops is not based on rotation of modes of action) }



11A *Bacillus thuringiensis*

11B *Bacillus sphaericus*

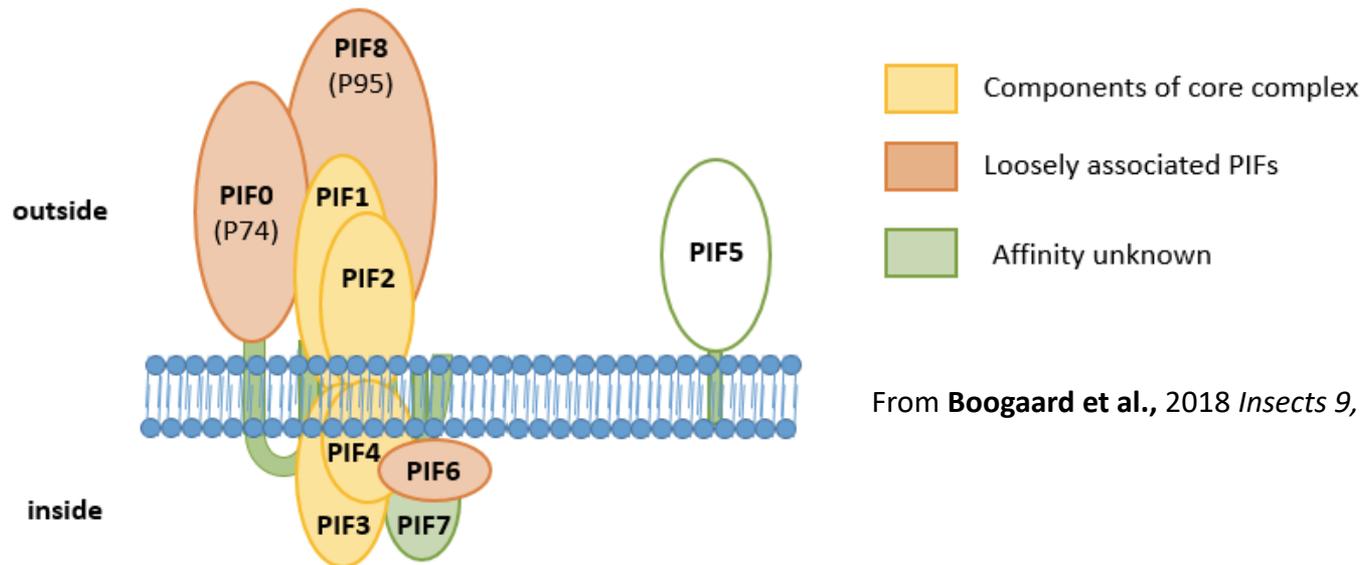
Different *B.t.* products that target different insect orders may be used together without compromising their resistance management.

Rotation between certain specific *B.t.* microbial products may provide resistance management benefits for some pests. Consult product-specific recommendations.

* Where there are differences among the specific receptors within the midguts of target insects, transgenic crops containing certain combinations of these proteins provide resistance management benefits.

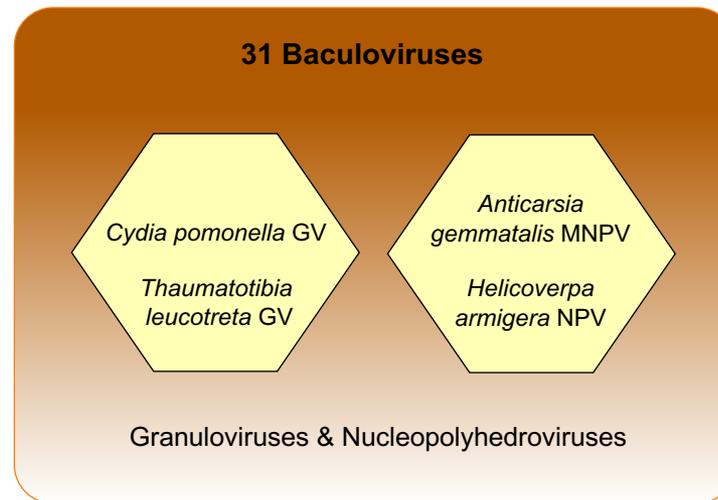
Mode of Action of Baculoviruses on Midgut Epithelium

1. Viral occlusion body disintegrates in alkaline midgut
2. Released occlusion derived virus passes through the peritrophic membrane to bind to species-specific receptors on the microvilli of midgut columnar epithelial cells
3. Viral envelope fuses with cell membrane releasing nucleocapsids in the cells
4. Entry mediated by viral proteins called *per os* infection factors (PIF 0-8)



From **Boogaard et al.**, 2018 *Insects* 9, 84

Baculoviruses acting on insect midgut



Insecticide Mode of Action

Major classes



Nerve & Muscle



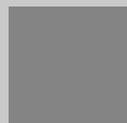
Growth



Respiration



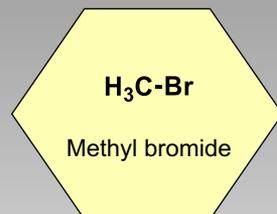
Midgut



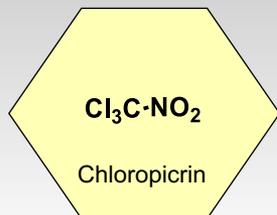
Unknown or Non-Specific

Non-specific (multi-site inhibitors)

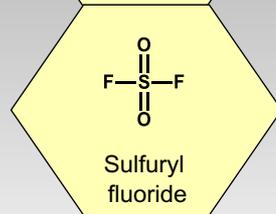
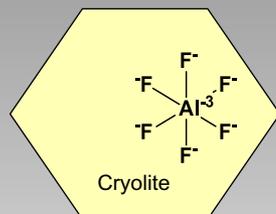
Group 8: Miscellaneous non-specific (multi-site) inhibitors



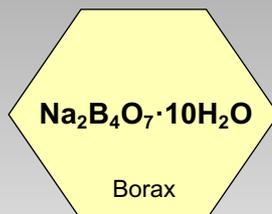
8A Alkyl halides



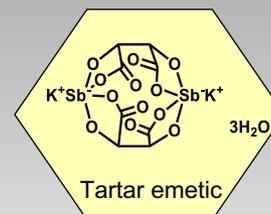
8B Chloropicrin



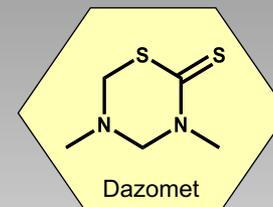
8C Fluorides



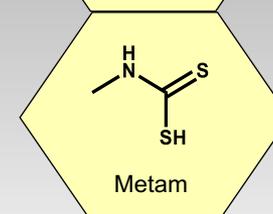
8D Borates



8E Tartar emetic



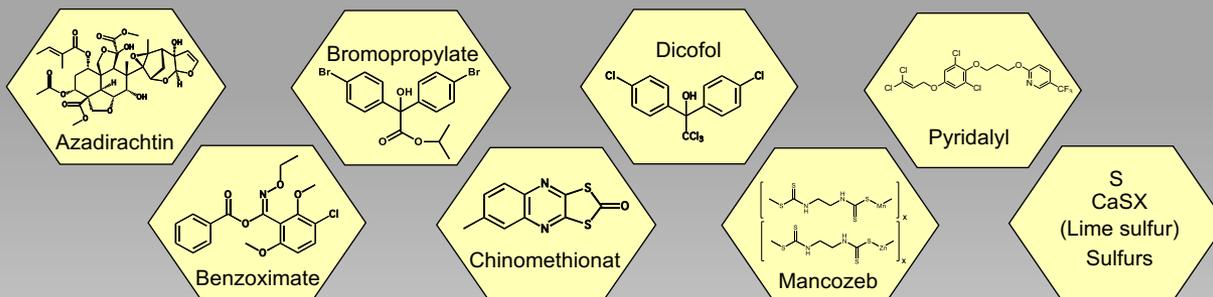
8F Methyl isothiocyanate generators



Unlike many other insecticides and miticides, non-specific or multi-site inhibitors do not act on a distinct target site but likely disrupt a variety of important physiological functions.

Insecticidal agents of unknown MoA

Group UN: Compounds of unknown or uncertain MoA



Group UNB: Bacterial agents (non-Bt) of unknown or uncertain MoA

Burkholderia spp,
Wolbachia pipientis (Zap)

Group UNE: Botanical essence including synthetic, extracts and unrefined oils with unknown or uncertain MoA

Chenopodium ambrosioides
near ambrosioides extract
Fatty acid monoesters with
glycerol or propanediol
Neem oil

Group UNF: Fungal agents of unknown or uncertain MoA

Beauveria bassiana strains
Metarhizium anisopliae strain F52
Paecilomyces fumosoroseus
Apopka strain 97

Group UNM: Non-specific mechanical disruptors

Diatomaceous earth

Compounds with the unknown designation may act on a distinct target site, but the mechanism of action has not been conclusively determined. Because of their non-specific or unknown MoA, active ingredients in IRAC MoA groups 8 (non-specific, multi-site inhibitors), 13 (uncouplers of oxidative phosphorylation), and all UN groups (UN, UNB, UNE, UNF, UNM) are thought not to share a common target site and therefore may be freely rotated with each other unless there is a reason to expect cross-resistance.

Important links

<https://www.ircac-online.org/>

