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2 **Circuits in the absence of cortical layers: increased callosal connectivity in**
3 **reeler mice revealed by brain-wide input mapping of VIP neurons in barrel**
4 **cortex**

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1 **ABSTRACT**

2 The neocortex is composed of layers. Whether layers constitute an essential
3 framework for the formation of functional circuits is not well understood. We
4 investigated if neurons require the layer organization to be embedded into brain-wide
5 circuits using the reeler mouse. This mutant is characterized by a migration deficit of
6 cortical neurons so that no layers are formed. Still, neurons retain their properties and
7 reeler mice show little cognitive impairment. We focused on VIP neurons because
8 they are known to receive strong long-range inputs and have a typical laminar bias
9 towards upper layers. In reeler these neurons are more distributed across the cortex.
10 We mapped the brain-wide inputs of VIP neurons in barrel cortex of wildtype and
11 reeler mice with rabies virus tracing. Innervation by subcortical inputs was not altered
12 in reeler, in contrast to the cortical circuitry. Numbers of long-range ipsilateral cortical
13 inputs were reduced in reeler, while contralateral inputs were strongly increased.
14 Reeler mice had more callosal projection neurons. Hence, the corpus callosum was
15 larger in reeler as shown by structural imaging. We argue that in the absence of
16 cortical layers, circuits with subcortical structures are maintained but cortical neurons
17 establish a different network capable to preserve cognitive functions.

18

19 **KEYWORDS**

20 barrel cortex, corpus callosum, rabies tracing, reelin, VIP neurons

1 **INTRODUCTION**

2

3 The neurons of the mammalian neocortex are stacked in layers (L). This organization
4 is considered as an essential scaffolding principle that evolution could expand to
5 generate increasingly sophisticated cognitive abilities (Shepherd and Rowe, 2017).
6 Layers are seen as units of processing and their input-output connectivity defines the
7 flow of information within the cortex (Feldmeyer, 2012; Miller, 2001). However, the
8 notion of layers structuring the flow of cortical processing might be misleading.
9 Cortical computations require foremost a functional neuronal circuit between defined
10 cell types (Guy and Staiger, 2017; Harris and Shepherd, 2015). Because neurons
11 exhibit surprising specificity in targeting of other neurons, there seem to be strict rules
12 of connectivity (Kasthuri et al., 2015; Motta et al., 2019). These wiring rules might run
13 in the framework of layers but perhaps are not determined by it. Whether the
14 organization of layers constitutes an indispensable feature for the formation of
15 cortical circuits is still unclear.

16 Therefore, we asked the question if correct laminar position is a necessary
17 prerequisite for a neuron to receive inputs and become properly embedded in brain-
18 wide circuits. An excellent model system to study the significance of layers is the
19 reeler mouse (Guy and Staiger, 2017). Homozygous mice lack the protein reelin,
20 which is secreted by Cajal-Retzius cells during development, to orchestrate the
21 migration of neurons during development (Lee and D'Arcangelo, 2016). In
22 consequence, the formation of layers is strongly compromised. In the somatosensory
23 cortex, neurons destined to become part of a certain layer are almost uniformly
24 dispersed across the cortex (Boyle et al., 2011; Dekimoto et al., 2010; Wagener et
25 al., 2010). However, this perturbation seems to have little effect on properties of
26 neurons and formation of functional circuits. Neurons retain their molecular fate as
27 well as their electrophysiological properties (Guy et al., 2016; Silva et al., 1991;
28 Wagener et al., 2010). The structure of synaptic boutons remains virtually unchanged
29 (Prume et al., 2018, 2019). Areal boundaries within the cortex are preserved (Boyle
30 et al., 2011). Moreover, whisker stimulation of reeler mice leads to the same
31 hemodynamic responses in the cortex and activates the same cell types indicating a
32 preservation of circuit modules comparable if not identical to a layered cortex (Guy et
33 al., 2015; Wagener et al., 2016). For these reasons, the reeler mouse seems ideally

1 suited to study functional brain circuitries of defined cell types in the absence of
2 layers.

3 We decided to focus on the connectivity of vasoactive intestinal polypeptide (VIP)
4 expressing neurons. They constitute a major subgroup of GABAergic inhibitory
5 neurons (Tremblay et al., 2016). There are several reasons why we chose this type
6 of neuron. First, VIP neurons have a very distinct laminar distribution with about 60%
7 occurring in LII/III, 20% in LIV and only very few cells in deep layers (Prönneke et al.,
8 2015). So they are heavily biased towards upper layers. Second, VIP neurons have
9 been suggested as major integrators of long-range input. They receive more inputs
10 per cell than other inhibitory cell types (Wall et al., 2016). They are most strongly
11 activated by cortical long-range input compared to pyramidal, somatostatin- and
12 parvalbumin expressing neurons (Lee et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). Because VIP
13 cells strongly inhibit somatostatin cells (Walker et al., 2016), which themselves inhibit
14 pyramidal cells (Zhou et al., 2020), it has been proposed that VIP neurons become
15 activated by long-range input during active states, disinhibit pyramidal cells and
16 thereby open a precisely timed window for integration and plasticity at excitatory
17 synapses (Fu et al., 2014; Pfeffer et al., 2013; Williams and Holtmaat, 2019). Third,
18 the input connectivity of VIP neurons is already well characterized across many
19 cortical areas (Ährlund-Richter et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2019; Wall et al., 2016; Zhang
20 et al., 2016). Finally, with the VIP-Cre line we can access these cells with high
21 specificity having no contamination from other cell types (Prönneke et al., 2015;
22 Taniguchi et al., 2011).

23 We first confirmed that VIP neurons lose their laminar bias in reeler mice,
24 establishing this mouse as a valid model system to study the circuitry of VIP cells in
25 the absence of layers. Then we generated maps of brain-wide long-range input to
26 VIP neurons in the barrel cortex of wildtype (WT) and reeler mice, using rabies virus
27 tracing. While we found that subcortical inputs innervated malpositioned VIP cells to
28 the same extent as in a layered cortex, the balance of cortical inputs was
29 fundamentally different. Ipsilateral cortical input was reduced, contralateral cortical
30 input was increased compared to WT. Reeler mice had more callosal projecting
31 neurons (CPNs) and hence a larger corpus callosum. We argue that the absence of
32 layers has little effect on innervation by subcortical structures but induces a different
33 circuit arrangement within the cortex.

1 **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

2

3 **Experimental animals**

4 We crossed the reeler line (B6C3Fe a/a-Rehrl/J, The Jackson Laboratory, Bar
5 Harbor, USA) with the VIP-Cre line (VIPtm1(cre)Zjh, The Jackson Laboratory) to
6 breed VIP-Cre/reeler mice heterozygous for reelin mutation and homozygous for Cre.
7 These animals were crossed to generate VIP-Cre/reeler mice homozygous for reelin
8 knockout. WT littermates or animals from the VIP-Cre line were used for comparison
9 in tracing experiments. For control experiments to check the quality of our Cre-
10 dependent constructs, we used C57BL/6J wildtype mice (The Jackson Laboratory).
11 For tracing experiments not requiring Cre expression and for imaging we used WT
12 and homozygous littermate pairs of the reeler line.

13 To visualize the population of VIP cells, we crossed the VIP-Cre/reeler line with the
14 Ai9 tdTomato reporter line (B6.Cg-Gt(ROSA)26Sortm9(CAG-tdTomato)Hze/J, The
15 Jackson Laboratory) to achieve tdTomato expression in VIP neurons.

16 Mice were housed in standard cages in a 12h light/dark cycle and with ad libitum
17 access to food and water. All experimental procedures were performed in
18 accordance with German laws on animal research (TierSchG und TierSchVersV
19 2013). All tracing experiments were performed with 12-20 weeks-old mice of either
20 gender.

21

22 **Viral constructs**

23 pAAV-DIO-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG was generated based on the backbone of pAAV-hSyn-
24 oG-EGFP-TVA-WPRE-hGpA (gift from Euiseok Kim). The sequence for oG-EGFP
25 was extracted using PCR with the primers F1-
26 CTATACGAAGTTATGGTACCTTAGAGCCG; R1-
27 GGATCCGGAGCTACTAACCTTCAGC. The sequence for TVA^{66T} was extracted from
28 pAAV-CAG-FLEX-TC^{66T} ((Miyamichi et al., 2013), Addgene #48331) using PCR with
29 primers F1-AGTAGCTCCGGATCCCCACCCCCCTGGATGC; R1-
30 CGGTAACGTGACCGGTAACGG. pAAV backbone was cut with restriction enzymes
31 KpnI-HF and AgeI-HF to open the backbone and oG-EGFP fragment was reinserted

1 together with the TVA^{66T} fragment using infusion cloning with an In-Fusion HD
2 cloning kit (Takara bio). The plasmid was packaged into AAV8 by the SALK Viral
3 Vector Core, from where it is available.
4 For RV-tracing experiments, 100-200 nl of AAV8-DIO-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG was injected
5 at a titer of 1.6*10¹³ IU/ml. RV-SADΔG-mCherry (EnvA) was injected at the same
6 location fourteen days later at a titer of 1*10⁷ IU/ml. Animals were sacrificed seven
7 days later. For non-transsynaptic tracing experiments 150 nl of AAV-retrograde-
8 hSyn-EGFP (Addgene, #50465) at a titer of 2-4*10¹² IU/ml was used. Animals were
9 sacrificed after fourteen days.

10

11 Surgery and viral injection

12 For viral tracing experiments, mice underwent intrinsic signal optical imaging to
13 localize the whisker C2 related cortical column. The injection pipette was inserted at
14 this location in WT and reeler animals. The surgery was performed as in (Hafner et
15 al., 2019).

16 For sedation and analgesia, mice were injected intraperitoneally with 10 µg/g
17 xylazine (Xylariem, Ecuphar) and 0.065 µg/g buprenorphine (Temgesic, Individor UK
18 Limited) in sterile saline, respectively. Anesthesia was induced with 3% isoflurane
19 (vol/vol) and maintained between 0.5 and 1% throughout the entire surgical
20 procedure (Harvard Apparatus, USA). Mice were mounted on a custom-built frame
21 with rigid earbars. A mixture of 2µg/g bupivacaine/lidocaine (Astra Zeneca) was
22 injected subcutaneously under the scalp for local anesthesia. A heating pad was
23 used to maintain body temperature at 37 °C (ATC 1000, World Precision
24 Instruments, Florida). Subsequently, a small incision was made in the scalp to
25 expose the right hemisphere of the skull. The bone over the somatosensory area was
26 thinned to transparency with a dental drill (OS-40, Osada Electric Company, Japan).
27 Then, the location of the C2 whisker-related column was determined and mapped on
28 the blood vessel pattern as described below. The bone above the target area was
29 removed with a syringe tip. A glass pipette cut to 20 µm tip diameter (Drummond
30 Scientific Co, USA) was front-filled with AAV helper virus. The pipette holder was
31 attached to a micromanipulator (Luigs & Neumann, Germany). The pipette was
32 inserted at the target location into the brain in an approximately 45° angle, orthogonal

1 to the curvature of the cortex. AAV was pressure-injected with a syringe at three
2 depths (750 µm, 500 µm, and 250 µm below pia). To reduce backflow, the needle
3 was left in place at each depth for at least three minutes. The scalp was sutured and
4 the mouse received a subcutaneous injection of 5 µg/g Carprofen (Pfizer) for
5 prolonged pain relief. Fourteen days later, the mouse was injected with RV-mCherry
6 without prior imaging. The injection was guided based on the blood vessel pattern
7 and landmarks from the previous surgery.”

8

9 Intrinsic signal optical imaging

10 This procedure was performed as described earlier (Guy et al., 2015; Hafner et al.,
11 2019). Briefly, Whisker C2 on the left muzzle was stimulated with a piezo actuator at
12 5Hz. Red light was shone on the cortex exposed, thinned cortex above the right
13 barrel field and its reflectance was measured with a CCD camera. Changes in
14 reflectance were average across 30 trials. The blood vessel pattern and the intrinsic
15 signal were overlaid to guide the subsequent injection.

16

17 Fixation and tissue sectioning

18 Mice were sacrificed by injecting an overdose of ketamine (100 µg/g; Medistar) and
19 perfused transcardially with ice-cold 10% sucrose solution followed by 4%
20 paraformaldehyde (PFA) in 0.1M phosphate buffer. The brain was postfixed in 4%
21 PFA for 4h. A vibratome (VT 1200 S, Leica) was used to section the brain into 100
22 µm-thick coronal sections rostral and caudal to barrel cortex, while barrel cortex was
23 sectioned at 50 µm-thick intervals. Sections spanning the barrel cortex were
24 subjected to immunohistochemistry while all other sections were stained for 4',6-
25 diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) only.

26

27 Immunohistochemistry

28 Barrel cortex sections were washed in TRIS buffer (TB) 1x15 min, TRIS-buffered
29 saline (TBS) 1x15 min and TBS + 0.5% Triton X-100 (TBST) 2x15 min, all at pH 7.6.
30 For blocking, sections were incubated 90 min at room temperature in 0.25% bovine
31 serum albumin/10% goat serum/TBST (Jackson Immuno Research). For primary

1 antibody labeling, sections were incubated 48-72 h at 4°C with (i) chicken anti-GFP
2 (Aves) diluted 1:500, (ii) mouse anti-RFP (Rockland) diluted 1:2000. Sections were
3 washed 4x15 min with TBST. For secondary antibody labeling, sections were
4 incubated 4h at room temperature with (i) Alexa Fluor 488-conjugated goat anti-
5 chicken IgG (Molecular Probes), (ii) Alexa Fluor 568-conjugated goat anti-mouse
6 IgG2a (Molecular Probes) diluted 1:500 in TBST. In some cases, sections were
7 stained in addition with primary antibody guinea pig anti-vGluT2 (Millipore) diluted
8 1:2000 and secondary antibody Alexa Fluor 633-conjugated goat anti-guinea pig
9 (Molecular probes) diluted 1:500. After washing 2x15 min with TBST and 1x15 min
10 with TBS, sections were stained with DAPI, diluted 1:1000 in TBS. After several
11 washes in TB, sections were mounted in Aqua-Poly-Mount (Polysciences).

12

13 Fluorescent *in-situ* hybridization

14 Sections of the VIPCre/Reeler/tdTomato mouse were stained with a riboprobe
15 against VIP RNA. VIP riboprobe was generated as described earlier (Prönneke et al.,
16 2015) using the following primers FP: CCTGGCA TTCCTGATACTCTTC; RP:
17 ATTCTCTGATTCAGCTCTGCC (527 bp; Allen Brain Atlas Riboprobe ID:
18 RP_070116_02_E09). The staining procedure was performed exactly as in (Prönneke
19 et al., 2015). The tdTomato signal was amplified after the *in-situ* hybridization using
20 the immunohistochemistry protocol described above but without Triton X-100.
21 Primary antibody rabbit anti-RFP (Rockland) was combined with secondary antibody
22 Alexa Fluor 594-conjugated goat anti-rabbit (Molecular probes).

23

24 Image acquisition and processing

25 Images were acquired on an inverted epifluorescence slide-scanning microscope
26 (Axio Observer, Zeiss) with a 10x objective (NA=0.3) or on 25x objective (NA=0.8).
27 For overview images only one plane was imaged, for the injection sites stacks were
28 acquired. Tiles were stitched after imaging and stacks were deconvoluted in ZEN
29 Blue software (Zeiss) to reduce out-of-focus light. Confocal acquisitions were taken
30 on a LSM 880 (Zeiss) with a 25x objective operated by ZEN black software (Zeiss).

31

1 Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) data acquisition and preprocessing

2 The *ex vivo* brain samples (n=3 per group) were imaged in a high-field 9.4 Tesla MR
3 system, using a mouse brain 4-channel coil array (Bruker BioSpin MRI GmbH,
4 Ettlingen, Germany). The scanning protocol included Magnetization Transfer (MT)
5 weighted images and diffusion-weighted images. For MT, a 3D Fast Low Angle Shot
6 (FLASH) sequence was used to acquire three datasets: MT-weighted, Proton-
7 Density-weighted, and T₁-weighted (repetition time 15 ms, echo time 3.2 ms, flip
8 angles [5°, 5°, 25°], 10 averages, voxel size 125 x 125 x 125 μm³). These datasets
9 were used to estimate MT saturation (MTsat) according to the method described by
10 Helms *et al* (Helms et al., 2008). Diffusion-weighted images were acquired using a
11 Stejskal-Tanner pulsed gradient spin-echo sequence (repetition time 2000 ms, echo
12 time 23.2 ms, 20 slices, 3 averages, voxel size 125 x 125 x 500 μm³, b values 3000
13 and 6000 s/mm², 30 directions each, 5 b0 images). The diffusion data were
14 preprocessed through denoising (Veraart et al., 2016), correction for eddy current
15 distortions (Andersson and Sotiroopoulos, 2016), motion correction (Avants et al.,
16 2011), and bias field correction (Tustison et al., 2010). A Diffusion Tensor model
17 (Basser et al., 1994) was fitted to the preprocessed data and fractional anisotropy
18 (FA) was derived (Garyfallidis et al., 2014). An RGB color-coded FA map was also
19 computed. To ensure that all images were centered at a common origin and oriented
20 in the same way, we registered the individual mouse brains to the digital template of
21 the Allen Mouse Brain Common Coordinate Framework version 3 (Lein et al., 2007).
22 The registration employed six degrees of freedom (three translations and three
23 rotations) to maximize the mutual information between each individual brain and the
24 template (Avants et al., 2011). Since this constitutes a rigid-body transform, the
25 original volumes of the structures were preserved.

26

27 Corpus callosum (CC) and isocortex segmentation

28 To measure the cross-sectional area of the CC at its midline crossing in a consistent
29 way across animals, we followed a multi-step process involving the computed maps
30 for MTsat and RGB FA. The MTsat maps, which exhibit good grey/white matter
31 contrast, were used to generate white matter masks through simple thresholding
32 (voxels with MTsat > 0.006 were classified as white matter). We subsequently

1 restricted the white matter masks to the five middle sagittal slices (left-to-right
2 thickness 0.625 mm) and further cropped them along the rostrocaudal (5 mm) and
3 the dorsoventral (3.125 mm) directions—thus confining them within a thin midline
4 slab that contained the entire CC crossing. This slab also included several other
5 white matter tracts, some of which (e.g. dorsal fornix) run adjacent to the CC and are
6 challenging to separate based on MTsat alone. We addressed this issue by
7 incorporating information about the orientation of white matter tracts. This was
8 available in the form of the RGB FA map, which is a color-coded representation of
9 the principal diffusion direction at each voxel (Pajevic and Pierpaoli, 1999). Using
10 ITK-SNAP (Yushkevich et al., 2006), we overlaid the RGB FA map on the MTsat
11 image, and segmented the CC manually, excluding voxels with principal diffusion
12 directions other than left-to-right. In reeler mutants, this step proved especially useful
13 for excluding a midline tract with a rostrocaudal orientation, running dorsal to the CC.
14 Using the final CC mask, we computed its midline cross-sectional area by multiplying
15 the number of CC voxels on the midsagittal slice with the 2D area of each voxel
16 ($0.125 \times 0.125 \text{ mm}^2$).

17 The isocortical volume was derived from MTsat images, with the help of the Allen
18 Brain Atlas. First we pooled all isocortical regions of the atlas into a single mask and
19 overlaid it on each individual MTsat image using ITK-SNAP. Then we manually
20 edited the mask for each brain, until it covered the entire cortical thickness, without
21 protruding into extra-cortical areas. The final isocortical volume was computed by
22 multiplying the number of voxels in the edited mask with the 3D volume of each voxel
23 ($0.125 \times 0.125 \times 0.125 \text{ mm}^3$).

24

25 Quantification and statistical analysis

26 Mapping of RV-labeled input cells was done by overlaying the tissue section with the
27 corresponding section of the Allen Brain Atlas ([http://mouse.brain-
28 map.org/experiment-thumbnails/100048576?image_type=atlasand](http://mouse.brain-map.org/experiment-thumbnails/100048576?image_type=atlasand)). Labeled cells on
29 all sections spanning from Bregma +3 to -4.5 mm were counted manually in
30 Neurolucida (MBF Bioscience). Cell counts in an area were either normalized by the
31 total number of starter cells (input magnitude) or by the total number of inputs cells
32 (input fraction).

1 For quantification of contralateral input labeled with AAV-retro-EGFP, we manually
2 counted all EGFP-positive cells in contralateral barrel cortex on sections from
3 Bregma -0.8 to -2.1 mm as well as all cells in a volume from pia to white matter with a
4 200 μm diameter around the injection site. Contralateral neurons were then divided
5 by the number of cells at the injection site as normalization to control for different
6 labeling intensities.

7 For quantification of VIP neurons in VIP-Cre/tdTomato mice, neurons were manually
8 counted on six sections per mouse on a patch of barrel cortex that spanned from pia
9 to white matter and was 1000 μm wide. In the occasional case a section was lost
10 during the tissue preparation, we interpolated for this animal the number of cells to
11 the same volume.

12 For a layer-independent analysis of neuronal distribution in the cortex, we divided the
13 space between the pia and the white matter boarder in 20 bins of equal size. We
14 counted the number of labeled cells in each of these bins and normalized them by
15 the total count of cells in all bins. Cell counts were exported with Neurolucida
16 Explorer to Excel. R software (www.R-project.org) was used to sort data and perform
17 statistical test with custom-written code. For pairwise comparisons between WT and
18 reeler mice, data were first tested for normality (Shapiro–Wilk test) and equal
19 variance (Barlett test). For normally distributed data with equal variances, we used
20 the Student's t-test. For non-normally distributed data, we used the Wilcoxon rank-
21 sum test. For normally distributed data with unequal variances, we used the Welch's
22 t-test. For multiple comparisons, we used the alpha-error adjustment by Holm. All
23 values are given as mean \pm SD. Graphs were produced using Origin software (Origin
24 Lab, USA). Adobe Illustrator and InDesign CS6 were used for arrangement of
25 pictures.

1 **RESULTS**

2

3 **VIP neurons are uniformly distributed across the cortex in reeler mice**

4 It is known from previous studies in reeler mice that parvalbumin- (Boyle et al., 2011)
5 and somatostatin-positive (Yabut et al., 2007) neurons lose their typical laminar
6 distribution but VIP neurons have not been investigated yet. We generated VIP-
7 Cre/tdTomato/reeler mice to visualize VIP neurons (Figure 1A, A'). While in WT they
8 showed their typical bias towards the upper layers, in reeler mice VIP neurons
9 appeared homogenously distributed throughout the thickness of the cortex (Figure
10 1B, B', Figure S1A). The number of VIP cells in barrel cortex stayed approximately
11 the same (Figure S1B). To check if Cre-expressing tdTomato cells are VIP
12 expressing, we stained sections of reeler barrel cortex against VIP-RNA with in-situ
13 hybridization. We found that $99.4 \pm 0.8\%$ of tdTomato cells expressed VIP ($n=3$ mice,
14 3 sections each; Figure S1C). This is the same level of specificity demonstrated for
15 the VIP-Cre/tdTomato/WT mouse (Prönneke et al., 2015). In sum, VIP neurons in the
16 reeler mouse retain their VIP expression, appear in equal numbers as in WT but
17 show no laminar bias. Hereafter we used the VIP-Cre/reeler mouse to specifically
18 target VIP neurons and investigate if their altered distribution affects their ability to
19 integrate long-range inputs.

20

21 **Rabies virus tracing for mapping of brain-wide inputs to VIP neurons**

22 We used Cre-dependent rabies virus tracing, in order to map the monosynaptic long-
23 range inputs to VIP cells in barrel cortex of WT and reeler mice (Wickersham et al.,
24 2007; Wall et al., 2016; Figure 2). We injected AAV8-DIO-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG
25 (hereafter AAV-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG) into the cortex of VIP-Cre mice having WT or
26 reeler genotypes. This lead to the expression of three proteins: the cell surface
27 receptor TVA (here we used a mutated version, TVA^{66T} (Miyamichi et al., 2013)), the
28 optimized version of the rabies glycoprotein (oG; Kim et al., 2016) and EGFP (Figure
29 2A). Modified rabies virus RV-SADΔG-mCherry (EnvA) (hereafter RV-mCherry;
30 Figure 2A) was injected two weeks later at the same location. Because it is coated
31 with the EnvA-ligand TVA, it can only transduce cells presenting TVA on their
32 surface. Furthermore, RV-mCherry is G-deleted, so that it needs the glycoprotein

1 provided in *trans* from the AAV to spread to presynaptic neurons. Its mCherry
2 expression labels these presynaptic neurons red. The starter cells appear yellow due
3 to the mixture of EGFP and mCherry (Figure 2B). This two-virus system allows the
4 visualization of brain-wide monosynaptic inputs to unequivocally identifiable starter
5 cells.

6 To check if our viruses are specific, we performed control experiments in BL6
7 animals without Cre. Injection of RV-mCherry alone did not result in any labeling,
8 showing that TVA is required for RV entry into cells (Figure S1A). When we injected
9 AAV-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG and RV-mCherry as in tracing experiments, we did not detect
10 any RV-mCherry labeling, neither at the injection site nor in the thalamus (Figure
11 S1B). A few EGFP-positive cells most likely resulted from a minimal Cre-independent
12 expression of the AAV construct. While RV requires very little TVA to enter cells,
13 which can result in Cre-independent leak expression, TVA^{66T} has lower affinity to RV
14 and thus needs to be expressed in much higher levels (Miyamichi et al., 2013).
15 Therefore, this receptor abolishes leak expression and each mCherry-positive neuron
16 can be surely considered an input neuron.

17

18 **Injections were centered on the whisker C2 representation**

19 In the barrel cortex, each whisker is represented by a cortical column. Although the
20 reeler barrel cortex has no laminar organization, it retains a somatotopic organization
21 such that adjacent whiskers are represented by adjacent modules (Guy et al., 2015).
22 We localized the cortical whisker C2 representation to guide our injections using
23 intrinsic signal optical imaging (Grinvald et al., 1986; Guy et al., 2015). Repetitive
24 single-whisker C2 stimulation elicited hemodynamic responses, which appeared
25 similar among WT and reeler mice (Figure S2A, C). The overlay of the signal with the
26 blood vessel pattern on the cortical surface (Figure S2B, D) provided a map to
27 accurately target the whisker-related cortical module with an injection (Hafner et al.,
28 2019). As a proof of principle, we injected AAV-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG and RV-mCherry
29 centered on C2 in a WT animal and sectioned the cortex tangentially. We could
30 confirm our target specificity as the highest density of inputs was present within C2
31 (Figure S2E). In this way we could target VIP neurons that belong to the same
32 functional modules in WT and reeler mice to have optimal comparability between
33 genotypes.

1

2 **VIP starter cells in reeler did not show a laminar bias**

3 VIP-Cre and VIP-Cre/reeler mice ($n = 7$ each group) were injected with AAV-TVA^{66T}-
4 EGFP-oG and two weeks later with RV-mCherry into the right barrel cortex. Cells
5 double-labeled with EGFP/mCherry were considered starter cells and counted on
6 each section where they appeared (Figure 2C-F). To visualize the distribution of
7 starter cells in the two genotypes, we divided the cortex in 20 equal-sized bins and
8 calculated the proportion of starter cells in each bin relative to the total number of
9 starter cells (Figure 2G). The starter cell distribution matched the general distribution
10 of VIP cells in both genotypes. While in WT there was a clear bias of starter cells
11 towards the upper third of the cortex, the distribution of starter cells in reeler was
12 broader with the majority of cells in the middle part of the cortex. On average there
13 was a higher number of starter cells in reeler (Figure 2H; mean WT: 158.3 ± 58.3 ;
14 mean reeler: 240.9 ± 158.1 ; Wilcoxon rank sum test, $W=30$, $p= 0.54$). This difference
15 could arise because brain tissue in reeler might absorb virus solution better. The
16 potential confounder of such a bias is addressed below.

17

18 **VIP cells received input from the same areas in WT and reeler**

19 To address the question if the absence of layers impacts the capacity of VIP cells to
20 receive proper long-range inputs, we manually counted all RV-labeled cells in the
21 entire brain but omitted cells in the barrel cortex itself because of their extreme
22 abundance. Therefore, local connectivity of VIP neurons was not assessed. Each
23 coronal section was overlaid with the corresponding atlas section of the Allen Brain
24 atlas. RV-mCherry-positive cells were assigned to an area, based on the outlines of
25 the atlas and the cytoarchitectonic features discernable with nuclear stain.

26 VIP neurons in reeler mice received input from the very same areas as WT mice with
27 no exception. Examples for areas in which we found transsynaptically labeled cells are
28 presented in Figure 3. Secondary somatosensory cortex contributed the highest
29 number of input cells in WT and reeler (Figure 3B, B'). In some areas morphological
30 differences of input cells became salient, for example in motor cortex where somata
31 appeared larger (Figure 3A, A'). Quantitative differences were easily noticeable in
32 contralateral barrel cortex, which contained more cells in reeler (Figure 3C, C') and

1 primary auditory cortex, which contained fewer cells in reeler compared to WT
2 (Figure 3D, D'). Thalamic inputs appeared very similar (Figure 3E, E'). In visual
3 cortex the distribution of projection neurons was clearly different with inputs in WT
4 located at the LIII/IV border but being more dispersed in reeler (Figure 3F, F'). From
5 these observations we suspected that the absence of layers could affect most
6 strongly the magnitude and the proportion of inputs to VIP cells.

7

8 **VIP cells in reeler displayed an imbalance between ipsi- and contralateral input**

9 When analyzing quantitative differences in the inputs between genotypes, we first
10 focused on more global categories of input (Figure 4, Table S1). We first summed up
11 all long-range inputs and then separated inputs from ipsilateral and contralateral
12 cortical areas, from the thalamus and from all subcortical areas. We normalized the
13 inputs by dividing the cell count by the number of starter cells to calculate the input
14 magnitude, which can be seen as a proxy for the strength of an input. VIP neurons in
15 reeler received overall fewer inputs per cell. This reduction was exclusively due to
16 fewer inputs from the ipsilateral cortex in reeler, while they received more
17 contralateral inputs per cell. There was no difference for thalamic or total subcortical
18 input.

19 The input magnitude might be influenced by the number of starter cells. One
20 presynaptic neuron could synapse on multiple starter cells. This divergent
21 connectivity prompts that with a rising number of starter cells, the count of
22 additionally labeled postsynaptic cells would decrease. Hence, the higher the number
23 of starter cells, the lower the ratio of starter cells to input cells (input magnitude). The
24 smaller overall input magnitude in reeler might result from this group having on
25 average more starter cells. To investigate this relationship we plotted the number of
26 starter cells against the input magnitude for the two genotypes (Figure S2C). For both
27 genotypes the slope was close to zero (WT: Input magnitude = 0.002*starter
28 cells+33.9, $R^2= 0.2$; reeler: Input magnitude = -0.002*starter cells+22.2, $R^2= -0.2$). In
29 consequence, there was no relationship between the number of starter cells and the
30 input magnitude, and hence the higher number of starter cells in reeler cannot
31 explain the lower input magnitude.

1 In sum, VIP neurons in reeler mice are embedded in a different long-range cortical
2 circuitry that contains fewer inputs from the ipsilateral and more inputs from the
3 contralateral cortical hemisphere.

4

5 **Auditory and motor cortex showed the strongest reduction in ipsilateral input**

6 Because each VIP neuron in reeler received on average less input, the subsequent
7 analyses for differences among individual areas using the input magnitude would be
8 inherently biased. Therefore, we employed another means of normalization: input
9 fraction. It is the number of inputs in an area divided by the number of total inputs in
10 the brain. It reflects how different inputs are balanced. We selected 41 consistently
11 labeled areas that constituted the majority of inputs (97.6% in WT; 98.8% in reeler).
12 We calculated the input fraction for each area and made pairwise comparisons
13 between genotypes (Figure 5, Table S2). For motor, somatosensory body region,
14 auditory and visual cortex we also summed up counts in the individual sub-areas to
15 calculate a total input fraction. VIP neurons in reeler mice received a notably lower
16 fraction from almost all ipsilateral cortical areas. The strongest reduction was seen for
17 primary auditory cortex. The input fraction for motor cortex was also significantly
18 reduced. The contralateral barrel cortex as well as the contralateral secondary
19 somatosensory cortex contributed a significantly higher fraction of inputs in reeler.
20 Subcortical input fraction was fairly similar and only the ventral posterolateral nucleus
21 of the thalamus constituted a higher fraction of inputs in reeler. This analysis of the
22 fraction of inputs validates that the proportion of inputs from the ipsilateral
23 hemisphere is reduced and from the contralateral homotopic area increased.

24

25 **Reeler mice had a larger corpus callosum**

26 The fact that VIP cells in reeler received more input from the contralateral
27 somatosensory cortex prompted the question if there are more callosal projection
28 neurons (CPNs) in reeler. We injected the retrograde tracer AAV-retro-EGFP (Tervo
29 et al., 2016) into the right barrel cortex of WT and reeler mice and counted the CPNs
30 in the other hemisphere (Figure S4A, A'). We normalized the count of CPNs by the
31 number of labeled cells in a given volume at the injection site. In reeler there was
32 about a 3-fold increase in the average number of CPNs (Figure S4C). This increase

1 was the same as for contralateral inputs to VIP cells. Moreover, the distribution of
2 CPNs was very similar to the contralateral inputs' to VIP cells, being more biased
3 towards the lower part of the cortex (Figure S4D, Figure 6F).

4

5 If there are more CPNs in reeler, the corpus callosum should also contain more fibers
6 and hence be larger. To provide additional evidence for an increased callosal
7 connectivity, we performed magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to measure the
8 dimensions of the corpus callosum. We performed a quantitative morphometric
9 analysis on three WT-reeler littermate pairs. We segmented the corpus callosum
10 based on structural information of magnetization transfer maps (Figure S5A, A') and
11 directional information of fractional anisotropy maps (Figure S5C, C'). We measured
12 the area of the corpus callosum on the mid-sagittal section, which was larger in reeler
13 in every littermate pair (Figure S5D). This effect was not generated by differences in
14 cortical volume as the volume of the isocortex was fairly well matched between
15 littermates, although in one pair the volume was slightly larger in the reeler mouse
16 (Figure S5E). Furthermore, we noticed on coronal sections that the corpus callosum
17 was shaped differently in reeler. It did not have a typical U-shape at the medial area
18 but was flattened out (Figure S5B, B'). These experiments indicate that reeler mice
19 have a larger corpus callosum because of a surplus of CPNs sending an axon to the
20 other hemisphere.

21

22 **Ipsilateral projection neurons were distributed similarly but CPNs differently**

23 In reeler mice, the whole cortex shows alterations because of reelin deficiency.
24 Therefore, the presynaptic projection neurons labeled in our study should show a
25 markedly different distribution than in WT. To investigate the pattern of dispersion, we
26 divided the cortex into 20 equal-sized bins and counted the proportion of presynaptic
27 cells in each bin for ipsilateral motor, primary visual, primary auditory, somatosensory
28 body (trunk+limbs) and secondary somatosensory cortex as well as for contralateral
29 barrel cortex (Figure 6). In most ipsilateral areas, projection neurons in reeler mice
30 had a very similar distribution across the cortical depth compared to WT but slightly
31 shifted towards the pial surface (Figure 6A-D). Only in visual cortex the distribution
32 looked notably different. In WT, most projection neurons were located around the LIII-

1 IV border. This peak was smoothed out in reeler, indicating that the projection
2 neurons were rather dispersed than inverted in their arrangement (Figure 6E). The
3 pattern of projection neurons in the contralateral barrel cortex, however, was
4 completely different (Figure 6F). In WT, projection neurons were predominantly
5 located in the upper third of the cortex, corresponding to LII/III. In reeler, projection
6 neurons were predominantly located in the lower two-thirds of the cortex.

1 **DISCUSSION**

2

3 The main aim of this study was to investigate if the distribution of cortical cells across
4 layers is linked to their capacity to integrate long-range inputs. We investigated the
5 long-range inputs to VIP neurons because they have a very typical laminar bias
6 towards the upper layers, which is lost in reeler mice. Using retrograde RV-tracing we
7 mapped the brain-wide inputs to VIP neurons in barrel cortex of WT and reeler mice.
8 There was no difference in the innervation by subcortical inputs. Cortical inputs were
9 from the same sources, however, in reeler ipsilateral cortical inputs were reduced
10 and contralateral cortical inputs were much more numerous, revealing a different
11 cortical circuit architecture in the absence of layers.

12

13 **Input to VIP cells originated from the same sources in WT and reeler**

14 We found that VIP cells in the barrel cortex of WT and reeler mice were innervated by
15 the same sources in both genotypes. This is not surprising because the existence of
16 the same types of projection neurons has been confirmed in reeler, although in cortex
17 they are in ectopic positions (Caviness, 1976; Diodato et al., 2016; Imai et al., 2012;
18 Steindler and Colwell, 1976; Wagener et al., 2016; Yoshihara et al., 2010). Numerous
19 tracing studies of cortical neurons in WT mice, including excitatory (DeNardo et al.,
20 2015) and inhibitory (Wall et al., 2016) neurons in barrel cortex, demonstrated that all
21 neuron classes in a cortical area receive input from the same sources. Therefore, the
22 feature, which is considered to distinguish cell types and relate to potential functional
23 implications, is the input's proportion a given neuron type receives. In consequence,
24 we expected to discover putative differences in the afferent connectivity to VIP
25 neurons between genotypes specifically on a quantitate level, which has not been
26 assessed for long-range projections in reeler yet.

27

28 **Subcortical fibers target VIP cells independent of laminar position**

29 When we looked at the proportion of inputs to VIP cells, we found profound
30 differences between WT and reeler. VIP cells in reeler received less input per cell
31 than in WT, which was exclusively due to a reduction in cortical inputs, while the
32 subcortical inputs remained the same.

1 The thalamic input comprised the main source of subcortical input. The cells in the
2 thalamus are at most only subtly affected by the reelin mutation (Lambert de Rouvroit
3 and Goffinet, 1998; Wagener et al., 2010). Previous studies have shown that
4 thalamic fibers from the VPM reach their malpositioned postsynaptic targets in the
5 reeler cortex although they take an unusual trajectory, reaching LII before bouncing
6 back to plunge down on the target cells (Harsan et al., 2013; Molnár et al., 1998;
7 Wagener et al., 2016). Together with our results, these studies support the idea that
8 fibers from properly developed subcortical structures find their ectopic targets in the
9 mislaminated reeler cortex in approximately the same numbers. In consequence, the
10 laminar distribution of VIP cells seems not to be linked to their capacity to integrate
11 subcortical long-range inputs.

12

13 **Reeler mice have increased callosal connectivity**

14 In the reeler cortex, both the VIP cells as well as their cortical presynaptic partners
15 are malpositioned. In this case, we found the circuit organization to be different. The
16 average number of ipsilateral long-range projection neurons converging on a VIP cell
17 was significantly lower than in WT. Especially the proportion of inputs from motor and
18 auditory cortex to VIP cells in barrel cortex was strongly reduced.

19 In parallel to the reduction of ipsilateral cortical input, there was a massive increase
20 of afferents from the contralateral hemisphere. We showed that in reeler there are
21 more CPNs connecting the hemispheres of barrel cortex and as a result the corpus
22 callosum is larger. Although previous studies have investigated the macroanatomy
23 and trajectory of fiber bundles in the reeler mouse (Badea et al., 2007; Harsan et al.,
24 2013), the enlargement of the corpus callosum has remained unnoticed. Similarly,
25 earlier tracing studies have just confirmed the existence of callosal connections
26 between homotopic areas but did not assess the numbers of CPNs (Caviness and
27 Yorke, 1976; Imai et al., 2012; Steindler and Colwell, 1976). At least, our observation
28 that the distribution of CPNs is biased towards deeper parts of the cortex is not
29 without precedent (Steindler and Colwell, 1976).

30

31 **Different mechanisms might drive the formation of ipsi- and contralateral 32 projections**

1 Because ipsi- and contralateral long-range inputs showed such an opposing change
2 in innervation intensity, we speculate that these two types of connections mature at
3 different time points and based on different mechanisms. A sizeable fraction of
4 ipsilateral projection neurons in reeler either fail to grow an axon or grow an axon but
5 fail to find their destined postsynaptic partner. There is subtle evidence that ipsilateral
6 projection neurons do not form excess projections that are pruned away but have a
7 directed outgrowth and their connections are stably established by postnatal day (P)7
8 (Klingler et al., 2018). On the contrary, during the development of callosal projections
9 a transiently higher number of callosal axons is reduced in an activity-dependent
10 process of axonal elimination (rev. in (Innocenti and Price, 2005)). In the
11 somatosensory system, CPNs invade the contralateral cortex by P5, reach their
12 maximum density by P10 and then reduce again to reach a stable level of innervation
13 by P20 (Fenlon et al., 2017; De Leon Reyes et al., 2019). Because the establishment
14 of permanent callosal synapses is only finished in the third postnatal week, they
15 might mature based on the network activity generated by already existing ipsilateral
16 connections (Petreanu et al., 2007; Suárez et al., 2014). Perhaps in reeler, the
17 pruning of callosal axons happens to a lesser degree than in WT to maintain a stable
18 network in which the inputs of multiple afferent systems are balanced (Caviness and
19 Rakic, 1978).

20 Another possibility would be that the absence of reelin impacts signaling pathways for
21 axonal outgrowth. For example, Sema3a is a signaling molecule involved in axonal
22 guidance that acts as a repulsive cue for axons (Polleux et al., 1998). Knock-out of
23 the sema3a receptor causes an increase in contralateral axon projections (Wu et al.,
24 2014). Sema3a and reelin pathways could intersect at the Fyn kinase, which appears
25 in the intracellular signaling cascade of both factors (Lee and D'Arcangelo, 2016;
26 Sasaki et al., 2002). Indeed, Fyn deficiency causes a higher maintenance rate of
27 growth cones (Sasaki et al., 2002) and knock-out mice show a lamination defect (Kuo
28 et al., 2005). Perhaps the absence of reelin collapses the synergy of these two
29 pathways and leaves more callosal axons intact.

30

31

32 **An alternative circuit to retain cognitive abilities**

1 Despite the absence of layers, reeler mice display no severe decline in cognitive
2 abilities, have largely preserved sensory function, and only have a slight impairment
3 of spatial memory and executive function (Imai et al., 2017; Pielecka-Fortuna et al.,
4 2015; Salinger et al., 2003; Wagener et al., 2010). So far this preservation of
5 cognitive abilities has been attributed to the fact that in reeler neurons seem not only
6 to retain their physiological properties but also their connectivity, implying the
7 formation of the same circuits despite the malposition of its parts (Guy and Staiger,
8 2017). However, our map of brain-wide inputs to VIP neurons reveals that reeler mice
9 have a different proportion of ipsi- and contralateral input. We argue that this change
10 in connectivity might emerge as a plastic adaption in pursuit of retaining global
11 cognitive abilities like sensory perception but perhaps fails to realize more specialized
12 and challenging domains of cognition. Because our connectivity map contains
13 information on the number of connections, it allows to make very specific
14 assumptions about behavioral impacts. For example, the auditory cortex fuels
15 information about sound to the somatosensory cortex to be integrated into tactile
16 processing (Lemus et al., 2010; Maruyama and Komai, 2018). This input pathway
17 comprises much fewer neurons in reeler. Behavioral experiments compelling reeler
18 mice to integration of sound into tactile perception might be a starting point to study
19 the functional significance of a diminished input. Similarly, the increased callosal
20 connectivity might hint that reeler mice rely more on bilateral information during their
21 sensory exploration. This could be tested perhaps in a variation of a corridor tracking
22 task adapted for reeler to exclude influence of motor deficits (Sofroniew et al., 2015).

23

24 In conclusion, we incline to the viewpoint that layers are important for the formation of
25 the mouse cortical network as we know it, maybe providing the guidance for pre- and
26 postsynaptic partners to meet across long distances. However, there are plastic
27 mechanisms independent of neuronal position allowing alternative circuits to form
28 that enable basic cognition. Looking across species, intelligence presents itself in
29 various connectivity schemes. The analogue to the mammalian cerebral cortex in
30 birds is the pallium, which is organized in nuclei (Butler and Cotterill, 2006). The
31 analogue in cephalopods is the vertical lobe, which is organized in serial matrices
32 (Shigeno et al., 2018). Both taxa evolved species with baffling cognitive abilities
33 rivaling mammalian intelligence (Roth, 2015). There is even strong evidence that in

1 the bird pallium neurons express the same molecular markers and assemble the
2 same microcircuits found in mammals despite their different arrangement (Calabrese
3 and Woolley, 2015; Dugas-Ford et al., 2012). Looking at different wiring approaches
4 will benefit our understanding of the essential features neuronal circuits require to
5 give rise to cognitive functions.

1 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

2 This work was supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft via CRC 889
3 (Cellular mechanisms of sensory processing; TP C07 to J.F.S.) and STA 431/11-2.
4 We thank Patricia Sprysch and Sandra Heinzl for excellent technical assistance. We
5 are grateful to Karl-Klaus Conzelmann for kindly donating RV-SAD Δ G-mCherry
6 (EnvA). We thank Michael Lingelbach and Edward Callaway for kindly donating
7 pAAV-DIO-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG.

8

9 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

10 J.F.S., J.G. and G.H. conceived the study. G.H. conducted and analysed all tracing
11 experiments. J.G. and M.W. gave experimental advice. P.T. performed microscopic
12 imaging. A.R. analysed the VIPCre/reeler/tdTomato mouse line. N.S, R.D. and S.B.
13 performed the MRI experiments. G.H., N.S and J.F.S. wrote the original draft.

14

15 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

16 The authors declare no competing interests.

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- 30

1 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

2

3 **Figure 1: Distribution of VIP cells is different between WT and reeler mice**

4 (A, A') Coronal section at the level of the barrel cortex of a WT and reeler mouse in
5 which VIP neurons are labeled with tdTomato. The areal/nuclear locations of VIP
6 expression remained the same in WT and reeler (scale bar: 1000 µm; Abbr.: Amy,
7 Amygdala; RSA, retrosplenial agranular cortex; S1/S2, primary/secondary
8 somatosensory cortex).

9 (B, B') Close-up of cortical tissue in WT and reeler mouse (insert in A, A'). In WT, VIP
10 neurons showed a stronger bias towards upper layers (II-IV). In reeler, VIP neurons
11 were uniformly dispersed across the cortical thickness (scale bar: 100 µm).

12

13 **Figure 2: RV-tracing in VIP-Cre mice is based on a different distribution and**
14 **number of VIP starter cells in WT and reeler mice**

15 (A) Viral constructs for RV-tracing. TVA^{66T} is a mutated version of TVA, to which
16 EnvA in the RV envelope has a reduced affinity. This ensures that low level Cre-
17 independent TVA expression does not permit RV entry into cells. oG is the optimized
18 rabies glycoprotein necessary for transsynaptic spread.

19 (B) Injection of Cre-dependent helper AAV on day 1 induces high expression of
20 TVA^{66T} and oG only in VIP cells. RV-mCherry pseudotyped with TVA-ligand EnvA is
21 injected 14 days later to infect VIP neurons and spread from there to first-order
22 presynaptic neurons using oG. Seven days later, starter VIP cells appear yellow due
23 to the mixture of fluorophores, presynaptic neurons have solely mCherry.

24 (C, C') Coronal sections through an injection site in the barrel cortex of WT and reeler
25 mice (scale bar: 1000 µm).

26 (D/D'-F/F') Inserts in C, C'. Cells marked by white arrowheads are double-labeled
27 starter cells that have been co-transduced by AAV-TVA^{66T}-EGFP-oG and RV-
28 mCherry. Inserts at the bottom show some of these cells in higher resolution.
29 Exclusively RV-mCherry-positive cells represent local inputs, presynaptic to the
30 starter cells, forming a dense network of cell bodies and neuropil (scale bar overview:
31 100 µm; scale bar insert: 20 µm).

1 (G) Distribution of starter cells across the cortical depth. Cortical thickness was
2 divided into 20 equal-sized bins. The proportion of starter cells in each bin was
3 plotted. While in WT starter cells were predominantly in the upper third, starter cells
4 in reeler were much more dispersed.

5 (H) Number of starter cells in each genotype. Purple circles represent individual
6 animals. (n=7 per group; mean \pm SD).

7

8 **Figure 3: Long-range input to VIP cells in barrel cortex of WT and reeler mice**

9 (A-F, A'-F') Sections along the rostro-caudal extent of WT and reeler mice showing
10 consistently labeled areas with presynaptic partners of VIP cells in barrel cortex. In
11 the top overview panels, the white contour delineates the borders of the respective
12 area. Higher magnification close-ups are shown below. Section planes are indicated
13 on the schematic sagittal brain section. (scale bar overview: 1000 μ m; scale bar
14 close-up: 200 μ m; Abbr.: AUDd/AUDp/AUDv, dorsal/primary/ventral auditory area;
15 MOp/MOs, primary/secondary motor cortex; PO, posterior complex of the thalamus;
16 S1-BF, primary somatosensory cortex, barrel field; S2, secondary somatosensory
17 cortex; VISal/VISam/VISp, anterolateral/anteromedial/primary visual area; VPM,
18 ventral posteromedial nucleus of the thalamus).

19

20 **Figure 4: Input magnitude from global cortical and subcortical areas highlight a**
21 **cortical phenotype**

22 Histograms representing the input magnitude from summed-up cell counts of brain
23 areas. Reeler mice received overall less input per cell, which was due to less input
24 from the ipsilateral cortex. Input from the contralateral hemisphere was increased in
25 reeler whereas subcortical input remained unaffected. (n = 7 per group; mean \pm SD;
26 *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01).

27

28 **Figure 5: Comparative analysis of the fraction of inputs from individual areas**

29 Mean proportion of RV-labeled cells in 41 individual areas normalized against the
30 total number of inputs in the whole brain for the two genotypes. For motor cortex,
31 primary somatosensory cortex body region, auditory cortex and visual cortex, the

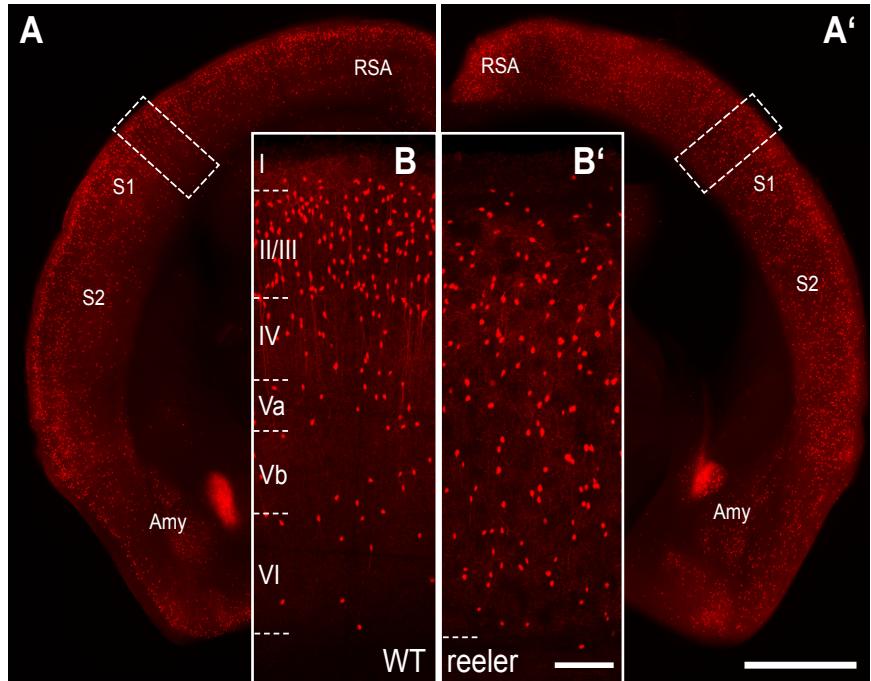
1 summated proportions of the individual subareas are shown as well. Pairwise
2 comparisons were carried out to assess differences in input fraction for individual
3 areas. For individual values see Table 1 (n= 7 per group; mean \pm SD; *p < 0.05;
4 Abbr.: c, cortex).

5

6 **Figure 6: Distribution of projection neurons in cortical input areas**

7 (A-F) The thickness of the cortex was divided into 20 equal-sized bins. We plotted the
8 fraction of inputs in a bin normalized against the total inputs of VIP cells from this area. In
9 ipsilateral areas, the distribution of projection neurons had one peak that was usually shifted
10 more superficially in reeler, except for visual cortex where the peak was just broader. The
11 distribution of contralateral projection neurons from the barrel cortex was very different, with
12 neurons in WT mostly in the upper third, while in reeler predominantly in the lower two thirds
13 of the cortex (Abbr.: S1, primary somatosensory cortex; BF, barrel field).

Figure 1



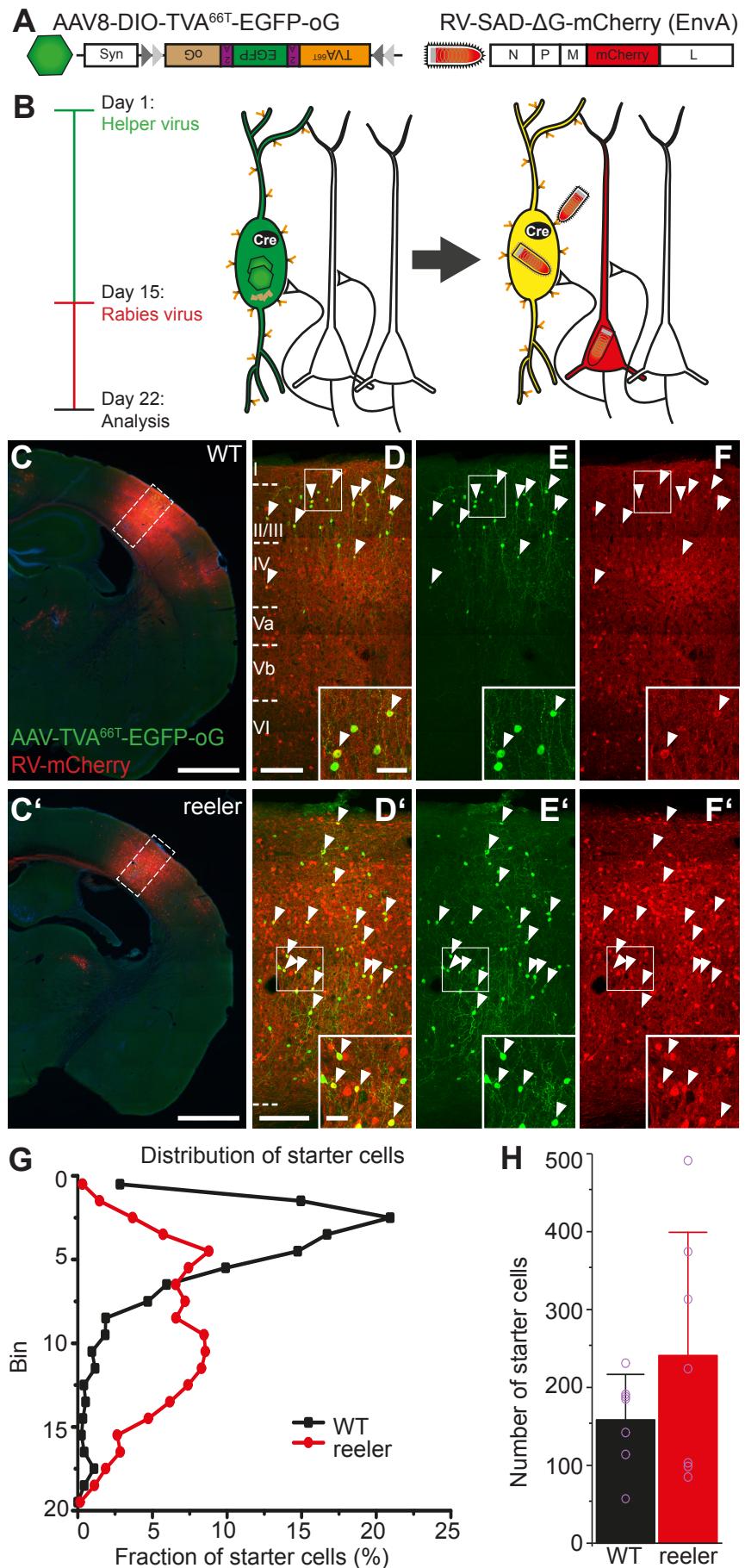


Figure 3 *bioRxiv* preprint doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.19.204868>. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not peer-reviewed) is the author/funder. It is made available under a CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International license.

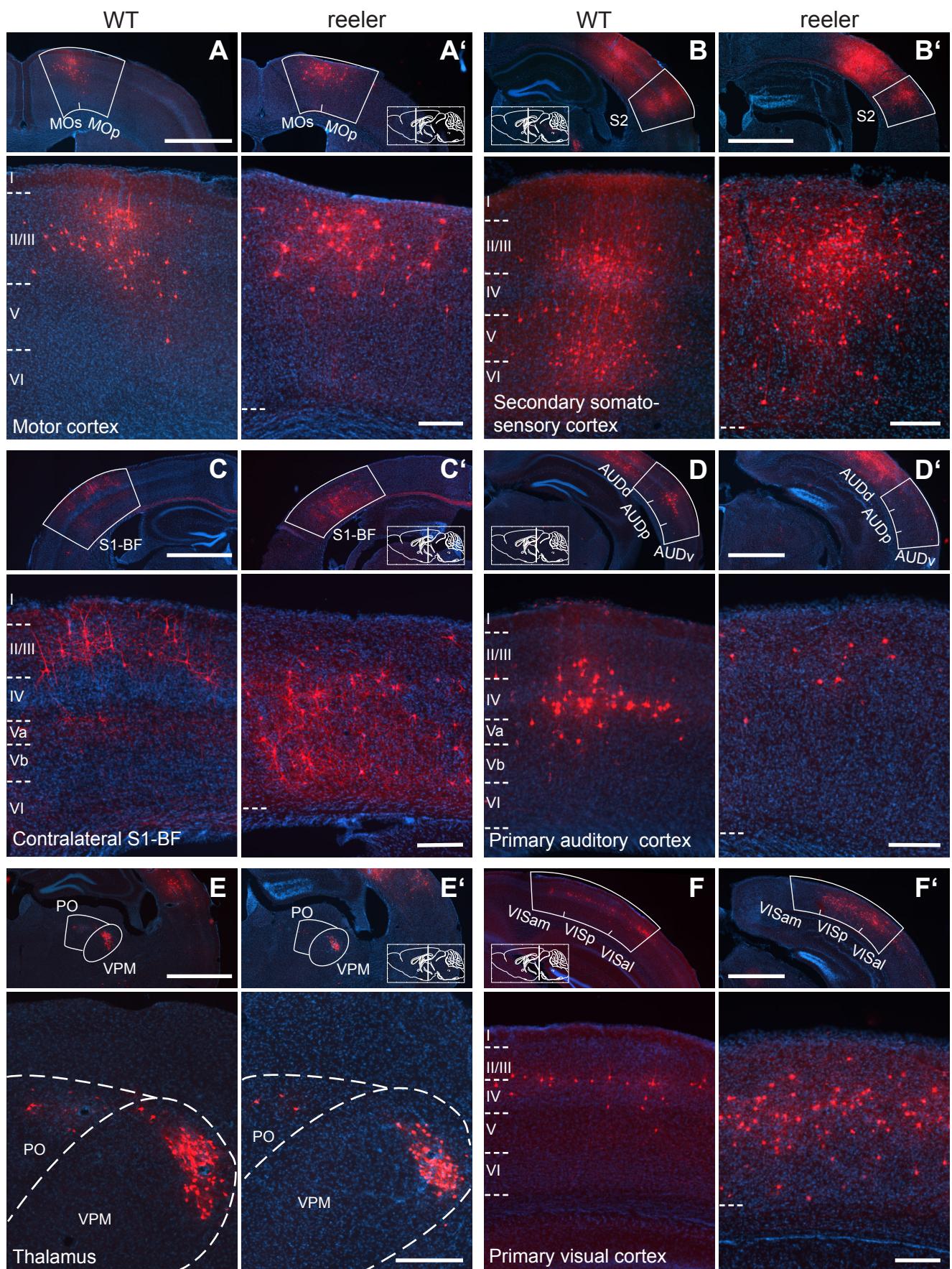


Figure 4

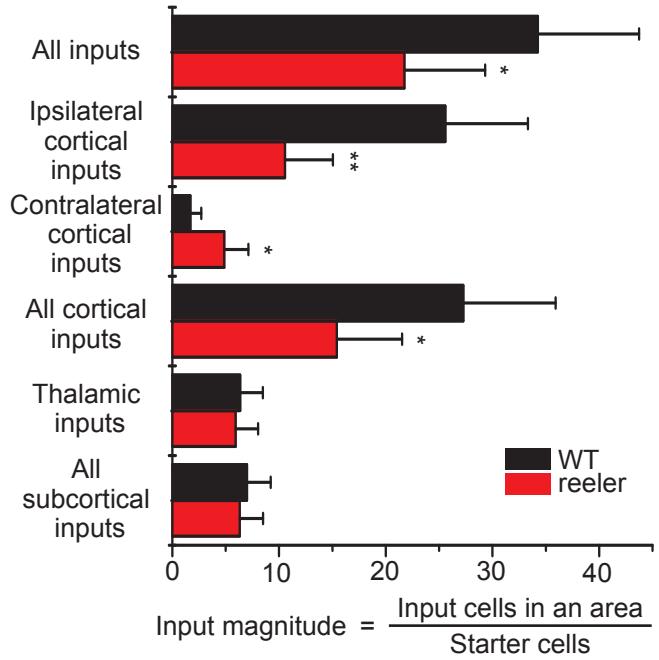


Figure 5

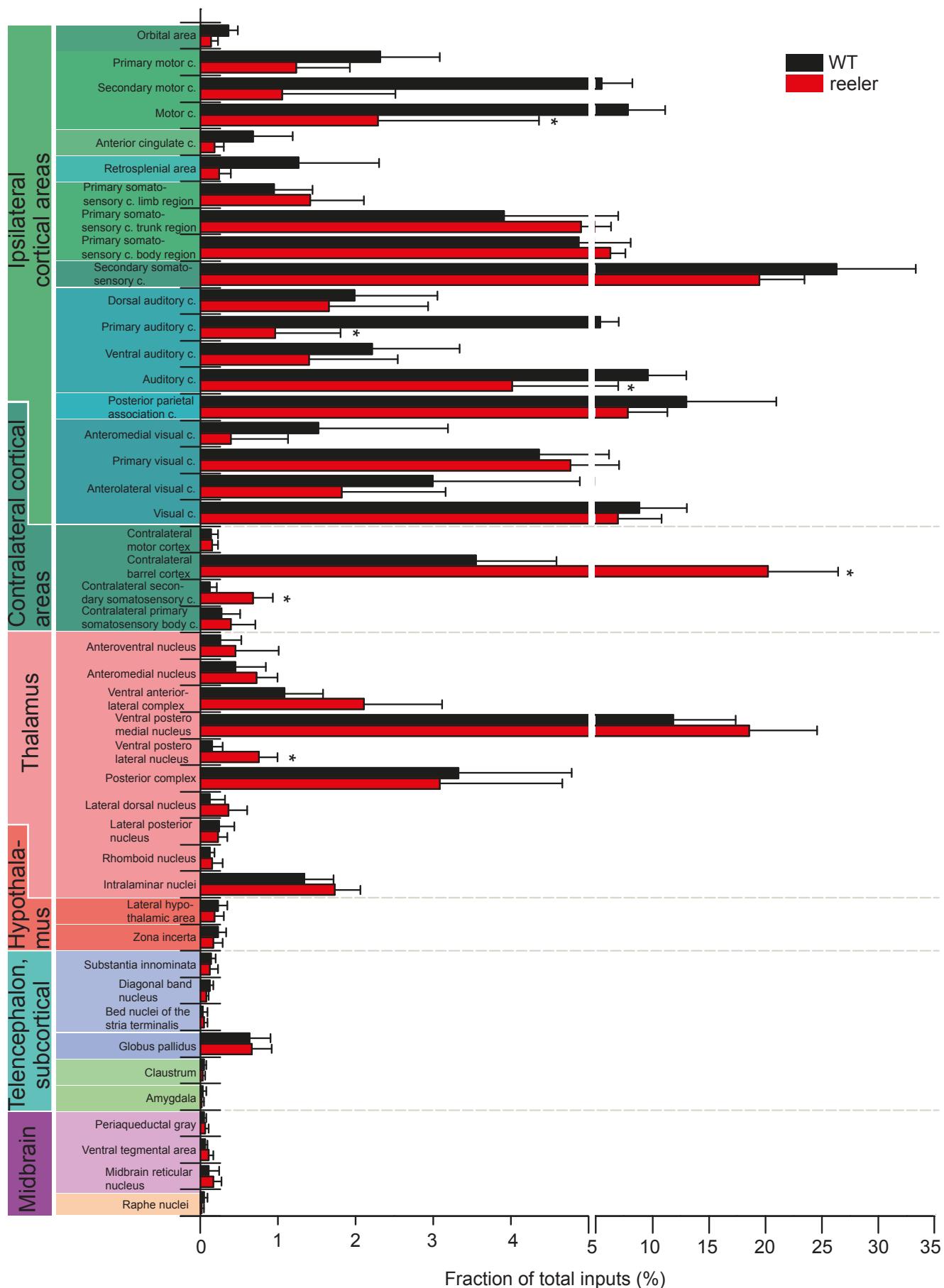
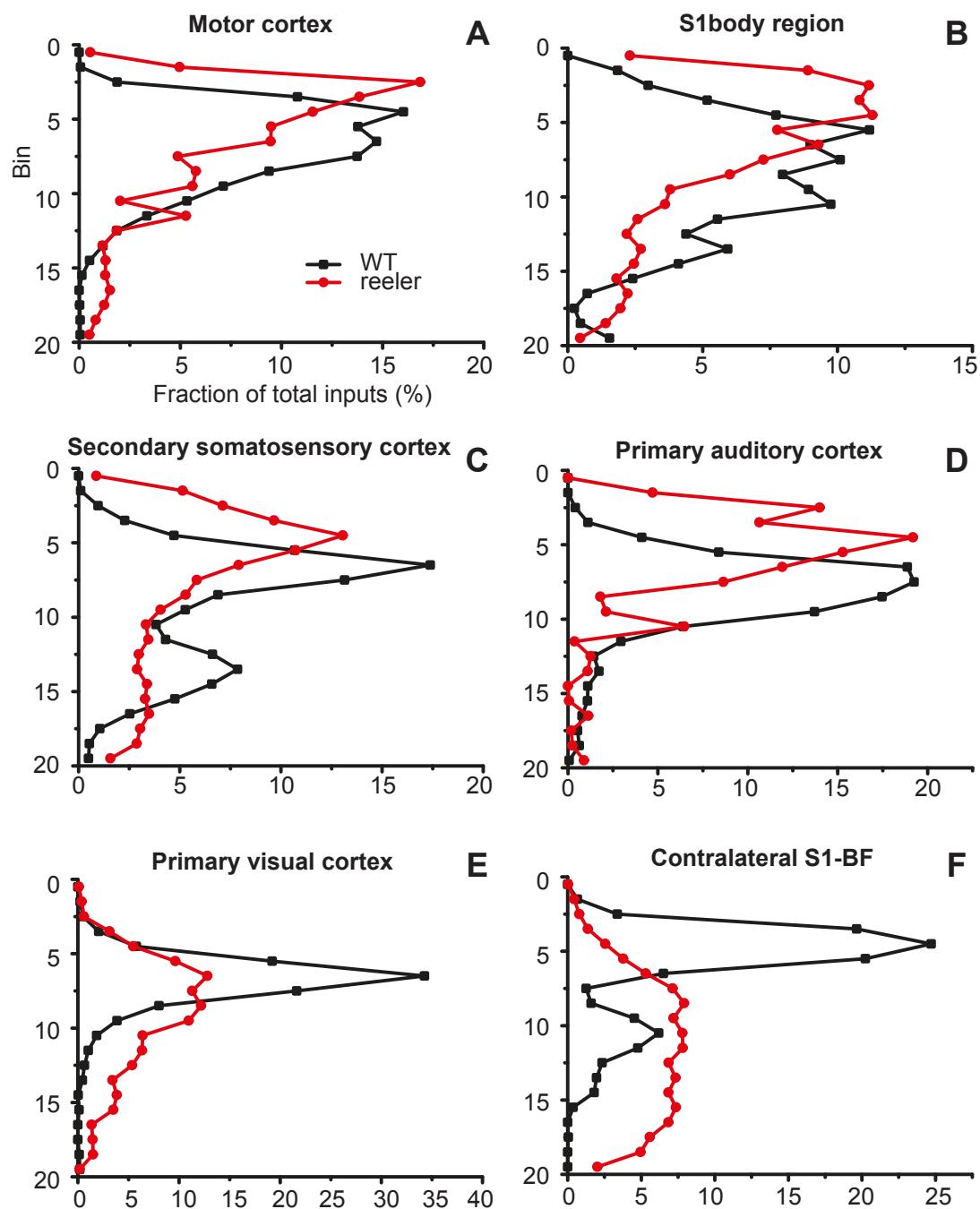


Figure 6



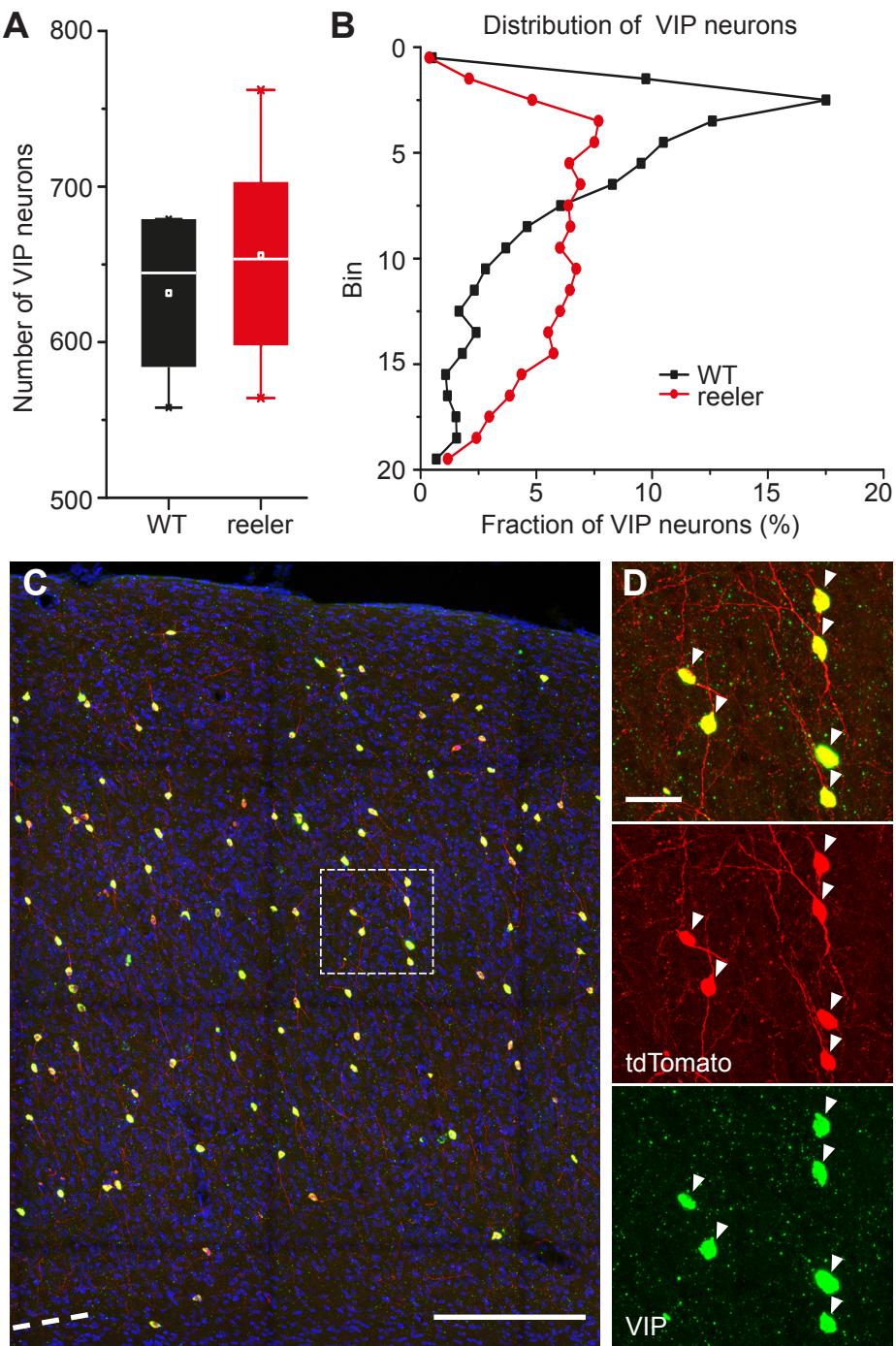


Figure S1: VIP neurons in the reeler mouse retain numbers and VIP expression but lose laminar bias. Related to Figure 1.

(A) Number of VIP neurons counted in a volume of cortex that spanned from pia to white matter and was 100 μm wide and 240 μm thick (n=5 WT mice; n=4 reeler mice; box plot: white line = median; white dot = mean). Counts were almost the same in WT and reeler.

(B) Distribution of VIP neurons across the cortical depth. In WT they showed a prominent peak in the upper layers. In reeler they were fairly uniformly distributed with few neurons close to pia and white matter.

(C) Section of barrel cortex of a VIP-Cre/reeler/tdTomato mouse stained against VIP-RNA (green) with fluorescent in-situ hybridization. Virtually all tdTomato cells overlapped with VIP signal (scale bar: 200 μm).

(D) Insert of C with individual channels to reveal co-localization of tdTomato and VIP signal (scale bar: 20 μm).

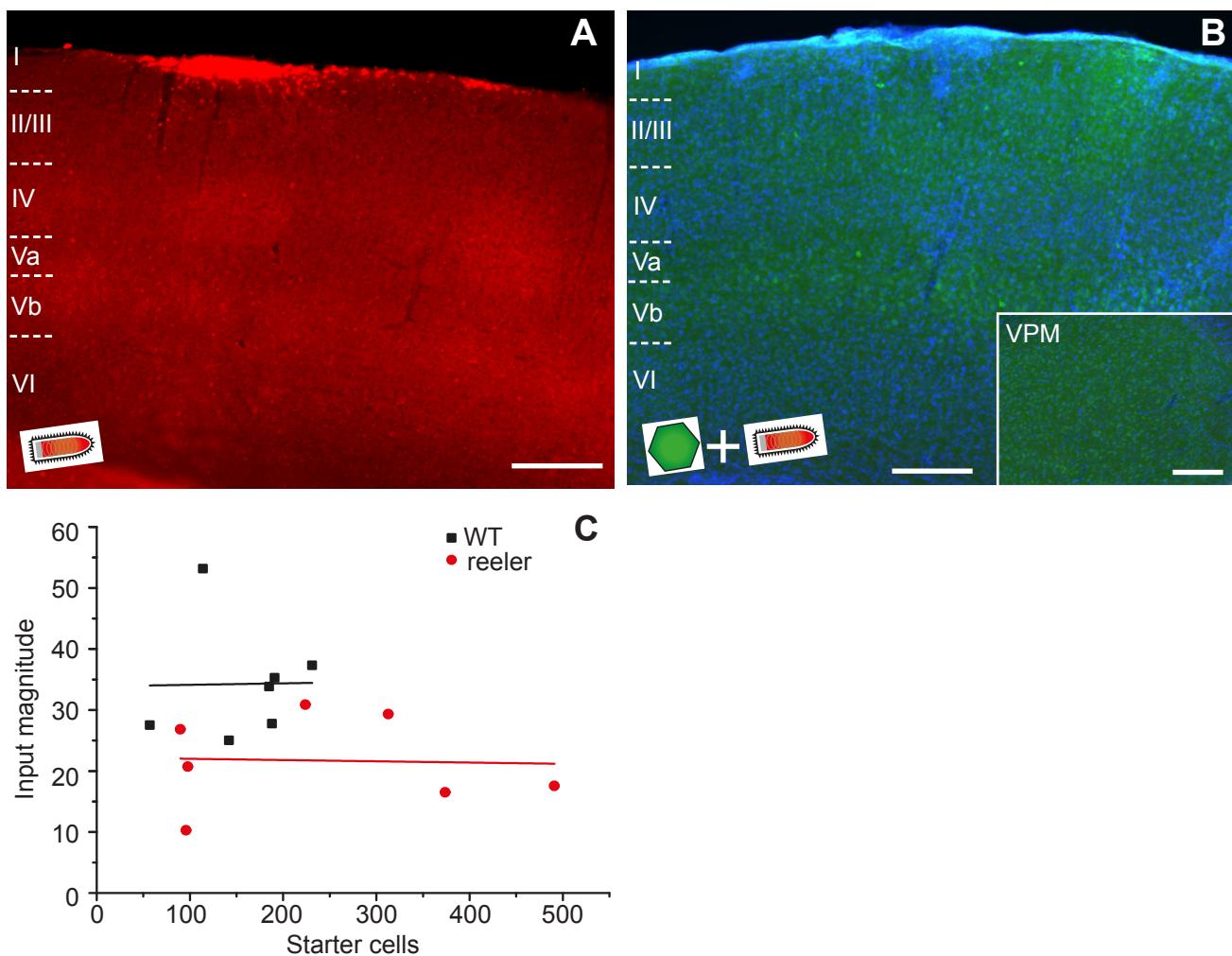


Figure S2: Validation of constructs for RV-tracing in BL6 animals. Related to Figure 2.

(A) Coronal section through the barrel cortex of a BL6 mouse (wild type) after injection of RV-mCherry, without prior injection of helper AAV. No transduced cells were detected. Uptake of RV into cells strictly depended on the presence of TVA (scale bar: 200 μ m).

(B) AAV8-DIO-TVA66T-EGFP-oG and RV-mCherry were injected with the same titer as in experimental conditions but in a BL6 (wild type) animal. We did not observe any RV labeling at the injection site nor in the ventral posteromedial nucleus of the thalamus (insert), a structure with reliable input to the barrel cortex. Therefore, this AAV does not show leak expression in the absence of Cre that would confound the tracing experiments (scale bar: 200 μ m).

(C) Input magnitude was plotted against starter cell count for WT and reeler. There was no correlation between the two variables. Therefore, the difference in input magnitude between genotypes cannot be explained by a difference in starter cell numbers.

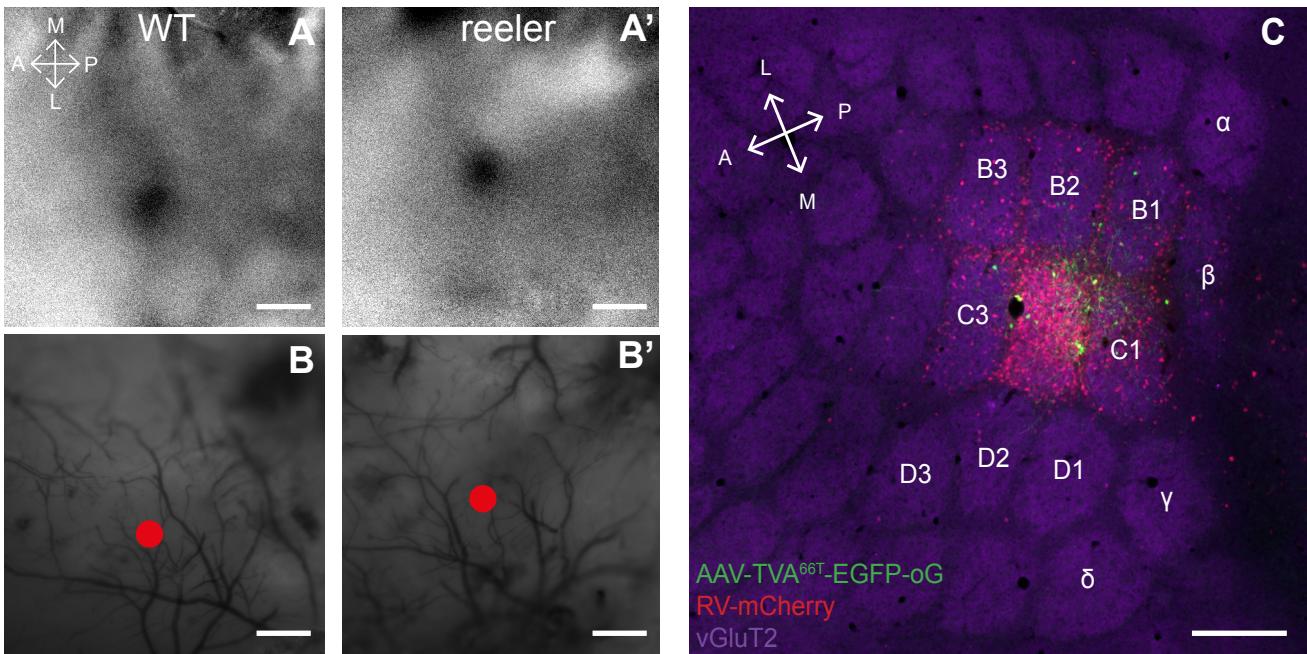


Figure S3: Mapping the whisker C2-related cortical module in barrel cortex to coherently target the tracer injections. Related to Figure 2.

(A, A') Red light was shone on the exposed cortical surface and its reflectance was measured with a CCD-camera, while the contralateral C2 whisker was stimulated. Repetitive whisker stimulation over 30 trials led to a localized change in blood flow, which induced a change in light reflectance visible as a dark spot. WT and reeler mice had very similar signals in terms of dynamics and size (scale bar: 200 μm).

(B, B') Surface vasculature was overlaid with image in A and the location of the strongest change in reflectance was marked. The blood vessels were used as landmarks to guide the injection pipette to the dot (scale bar: 200 μm).

(C) Tangential section of barrel cortex after targeted injection of AAV-TVA66T-EGFP-oG and RV-mCherry into the C2 column. Staining thalamic terminals with vesicular glutamate transporter 2 (vGluT2) allowed to visualize the barrels. The density of input cells was highest in C2 indicating that the majority of VIP starter cells was located within this barrel-related column (scale bar: 200 μm).

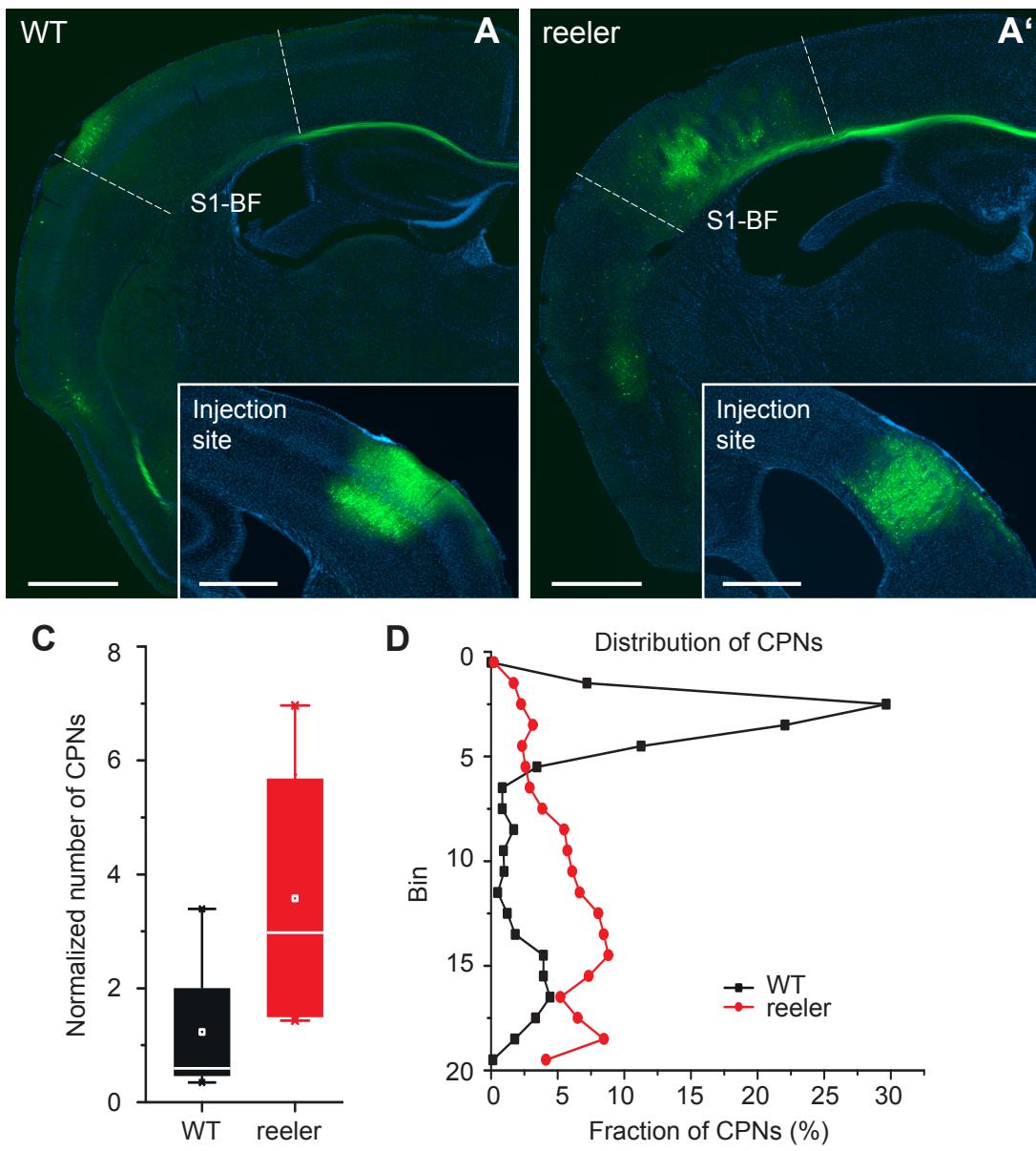


Figure S4: Retrograde tracing of callosal projection neurons (CPNs). Related to Figure 4.

(A, A') Coronal sections through the barrel cortex contralateral to the injection site of AAV-retro-EGFP. CPNs are more numerous and more dispersed in reeler. The injection site is shown in the insert (scale bar: overview: 1000 μ m; insert 500 μ m).

(B) Number of CPNs normalized by number of cells at the injection site in a volume from pia to white matter with a 200 μ m diameter around the injection site. Reeler mice had about 3 times more CPNs than WT.

(D) Distribution of CPNs across the cortical depth. The cortex was divided into 20 bins of equal size and the relative fraction of CPNs in each bin was plotted. CPNs in WT were predominantly in the upper part corresponding to LII/III. In reeler they were more in the deeper parts of the cortex. The distribution of all CPNs was similar to the distribution of CPNs targeting VIP cells in both genotypes.

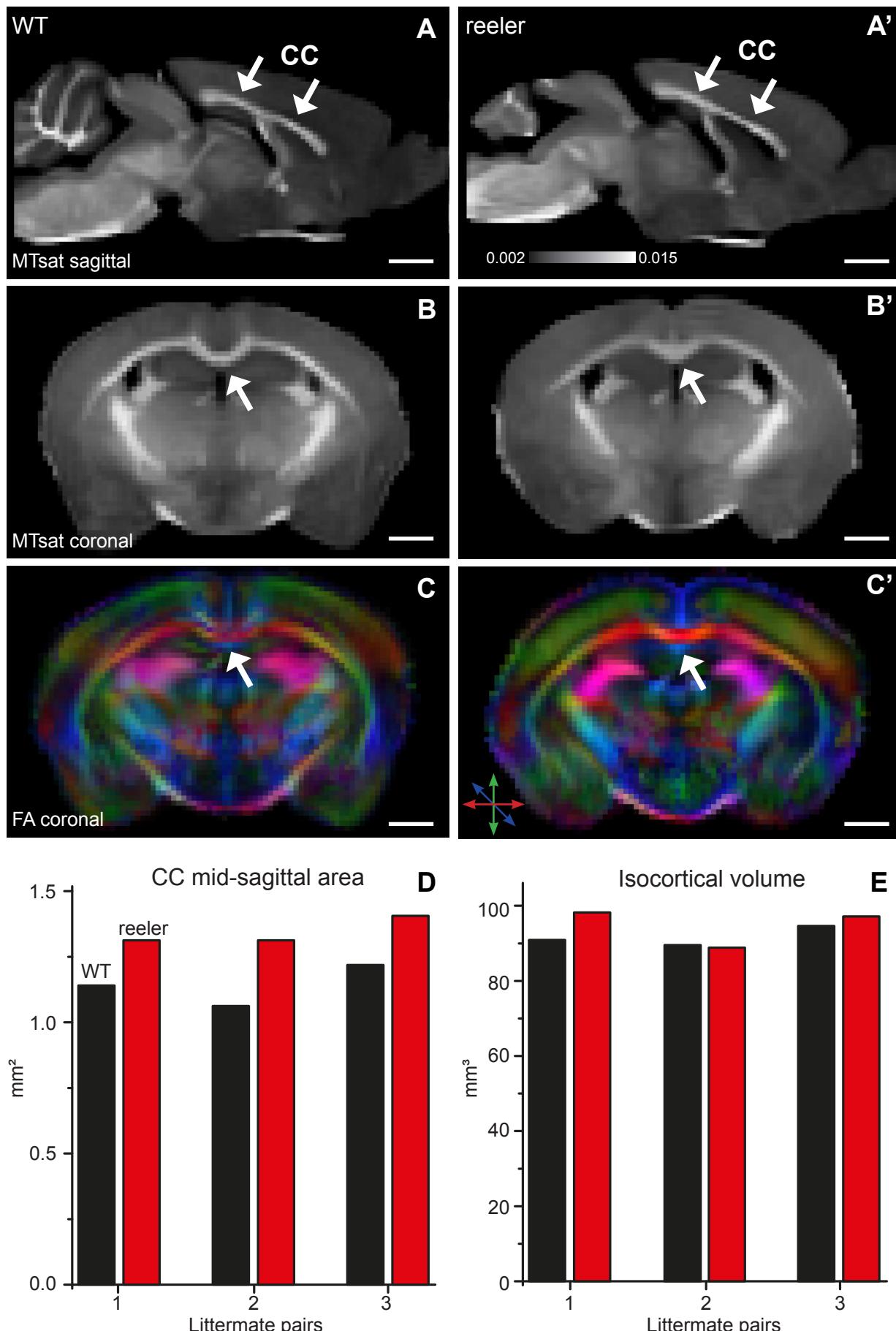


Figure S5: MRI of WT and reeler mice to assess dimensions of corpus callosum. Related to Figure 4.

(A, A') Sagittal maps of magnetization transfer saturation (MTsat) of a WT and reeler mouse brain acquired ex-vivo. These maps were used to determine the dimensions of the corpus callosum (CC).

(B, B') Coronal MTsat map of WT versus reeler mouse. At the midline the CC showed a different geometry between genotypes. In reeler mice the characteristic curvature of WT mice was absent so that the top of the CC appeared flatter.

(C, C') Fractional anisotropy (FA) maps show the color-coded directionality of fibers. Because fibers of the CC run in the medio-lateral direction they could be distinguished from whiter matter bundles more dorsally or more ventrally that run in the rostro-caudal direction.

(D) Mid-sagittal area of the CC of individual WT and reeler mice compared between littermate pairs. In each pair, the reeler mouse had a larger area, probably indicating that it is comprised of a higher number of callosal fibers.

(E) Total isocortical volume of individual WT and reeler mice compared between littermate pairs. The volume was almost the same except for one pair in which the reeler mouse showed a slightly higher volume.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation (SD) for input magnitude from global areas. P-Values were calculated with pairwise comparisons and adjusted for multiple comparisons. Related to Figure 5.

Area	WT		Reeler		p-value	adj.p-value
	mean	SD	mean	SD		
All inputs	34.26	9.49	21.74	7.58	0.0183	0.0183*
Ipsilateral cortical inputs	25.59	7.74	10.56	4.49	0.0008	0.0032**
Contralateral cortical inputs	1.68	1.03	4.86	2.26	0.0175	0.0355*
All cortical inputs	27.27	8.64	15.42	6.11	0.0118	0.0355*
Thalamic inputs	6.36	2.13	5.93	2.10	0.7124	1.0000
All subcortical inputs	6.99	2.24	6.32	2.18	0.5819	0.5819

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation (SD) for input fraction from individual areas. P-Values were calculated with pairwise comparisons and adjusted for multiple comparisons. Related to Figure 6.

Area	WT		Reeler		p-value	adj.p-value
	mean	SD	mean	SD		
Orbital area	0.36	0.13	0.13	0.09	0.0023	0.0854
Primary motor c.	2.33	0.76	1.24	0.69	0.0158	0.5534
Secondary motor c.	5.55	2.72	1.06	1.46	0.0041	0.1469
Motor c.	7.88	3.28	2.29	2.07	0.0070	0.0350*
Anterior cingulate c.	0.68	0.51	0.18	0.13	0.0407	1.0000
Retrosplenial area	1.26	1.04	0.25	0.15	0.0410	1.0000
Primary somatosensory c. limb	0.96	0.49	1.42	0.69	0.1736	1.0000
Primary somatosensory c. trunk	3.92	3.10	4.90	1.49	0.4637	1.0000
Primary somatosensory c. body	4.87	3.24	6.32	1.33	0.3056	0.6113
Secondary somatosensory c.	26.27	6.99	19.47	3.98	0.0450	1.0000
Dorsal auditory c.	1.99	1.06	1.66	1.28	0.4557	1.0000
Primary auditory c.	5.43	1.64	0.96	0.85	0.0012	0.0443*
Ventral auditory c.	2.21	1.13	1.40	1.15	0.2055	1.0000
Auditory c.	9.63	3.40	4.02	3.01	0.0070	0.0350*
Posterior parietal associaton c.	13.02	7.95	7.87	3.49	0.1423	1.0000
Anteromedial visual c.	1.52	1.68	0.40	0.73	0.0724	1.0000
Primary visual c.	4.36	1.84	4.77	2.33	0.7251	1.0000
Anterolateral visual c.	3.00	1.89	1.83	1.34	0.2046	1.0000
Visual c.	8.88	4.19	6.99	3.85	0.3962	0.6113
Contralateral motor cortex	0.14	0.08	0.16	0.07	0.6612	1.0000
Contralateral barrel cortex	3.55	1.04	20.22	6.20	0.0003	0.0134*
Contralateral secondary somatosensory c.	0.12	0.09	0.67	0.25	0.0008	0.0298*
Contralateral primary somatosensory body c.	0.27	0.24	0.38	0.32	0.7104	1.0000
Anteroventral nucleus	0.26	0.27	0.45	0.57	0.4496	1.0000
Anteromedial nucleus	0.45	0.39	0.72	0.27	0.1704	1.0000
Ventral anterior-lateral complex	1.09	0.50	2.11	1.01	0.0341	1.0000
Ventral posteromedial complex	11.87	5.51	18.57	5.99	0.0262	0.8916
Ventral posterolateral complex	0.16	0.13	0.76	0.23	0.0006	0.0233*
Posterior complex	3.33	1.45	3.08	1.59	0.4557	1.0000
Lateral dorsal nucleus	0.13	0.18	0.36	0.25	0.1098	1.0000
Lateral posterior nucleus	0.24	0.20	0.23	0.12	0.9147	1.0000
Rhomboïd nulceus	0.11	0.07	0.16	0.13	0.4547	1.0000
Intralaminar nucleus	1.33	0.39	1.74	0.33	0.0572	1.0000
Lateral hypothalamic area	0.22	0.12	0.18	0.12	0.4721	1.0000
Zona Incerta	0.22	0.11	0.17	0.12	0.8048	1.0000
Substantia innominata	0.13	0.06	0.13	0.10	0.9016	1.0000
Diagonal band	0.12	0.05	0.07	0.04	0.0823	1.0000
Bed nuclei of the stria terminalis	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.05	1.0000	1.0000
Globus pallidus	0.63	0.28	0.66	0.26	0.8299	1.0000
Claustrum	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.2314	1.0000
Amygdala	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.4951	1.0000
Periaqueductal gray	0.05	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.4469	1.0000
Ventral tegmental area	0.07	0.03	0.10	0.06	0.2039	1.0000
Midbrain reticular nucleus	0.10	0.13	0.16	0.10	0.1282	1.0000
Raphe Nuclei	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.3663	1.0000