

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE REHOMING OF ANIMALS USED FOR SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

Christel Moons | SDLŽ lecture | 20 October 2022

INTRODUCTION

LEGISLATION

- Previously rehoming practiced on a voluntary basis
- EU Directive 2010/63
 - Member states may allow animals to be rehomed
 - If the health of the animal allows it
 - If there is no danger to public health, animal health or the environment
 - If appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the wellbeing of the animal
 - Animal Welfare Body must advise on rehoming schemes



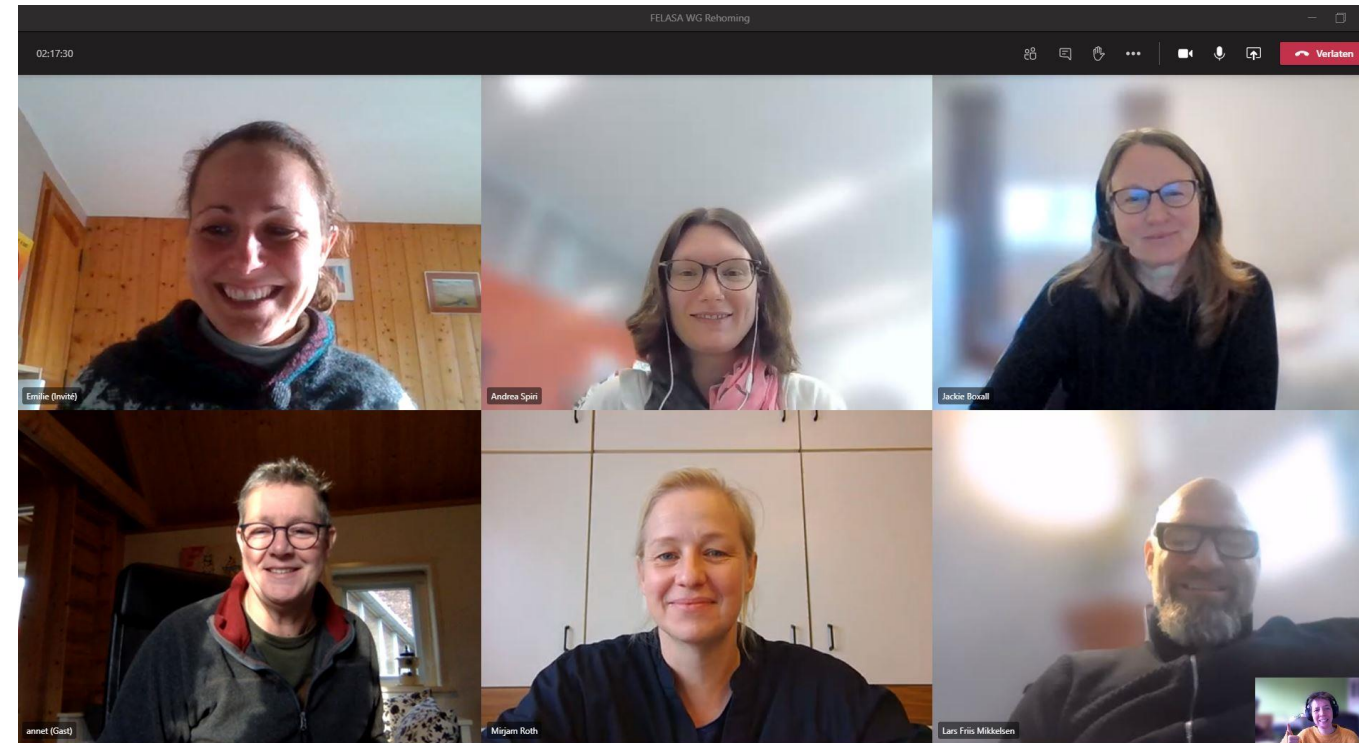
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FELASA WORKING GROUP

– 2018 – 2021 (2022)

– Composition:

- Emilie Ecuier (convenor; FR)
- Jackie Boxall (UK)
- Annet Louwerse (NL)
- Lars Mikkelsen (DK)
- Christel Moons (BE)
- Mirjam Roth (DE)
- Andrea Spiri (SUI)



– Survey to FELASA members + redaction of recommendations according to FELASA TORs

RECOMMENDATIONS (SUBMITTED TO LABORATORY ANIMALS)

- General section
- Species-specific requirements of
 - Mice, rats and rabbits
 - Cats and dogs
 - Pigs and minipigs
 - Horses and camelids
 - Primates

MY TALK TODAY:

- General considerations
- Steps in the rehoming process
- Rehoming research animals at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Ghent University

DEFINITION OF REHOMING

A change in location for an animal previously used or intended to be used for scientific purposes, where the animal spends the rest of its life at a location suitable for its needs without undergoing any further scientific procedures

- Excludes “internal rehoming”

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

FOUR KEY ISSUES FOR ANIMAL WELFARE



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Physical and mental health
of the animal
must allow rehoming

The difference
between environments
pre and post rehoming

The expectations of
the potential adopter

The cost of rehoming

Physical and mental health
of the animal
must allow rehoming

- Does not require animal to be in perfect health
- Debatable what “allowable” means
- Process to make a decision is difficult



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FELASA 2016 conference poll: Beagle, male castrated, 11 years, has been used for nutrition experiments since nine years. History of rupture of cruciate ligaments bilaterally, surgically corrected 3 years ago.

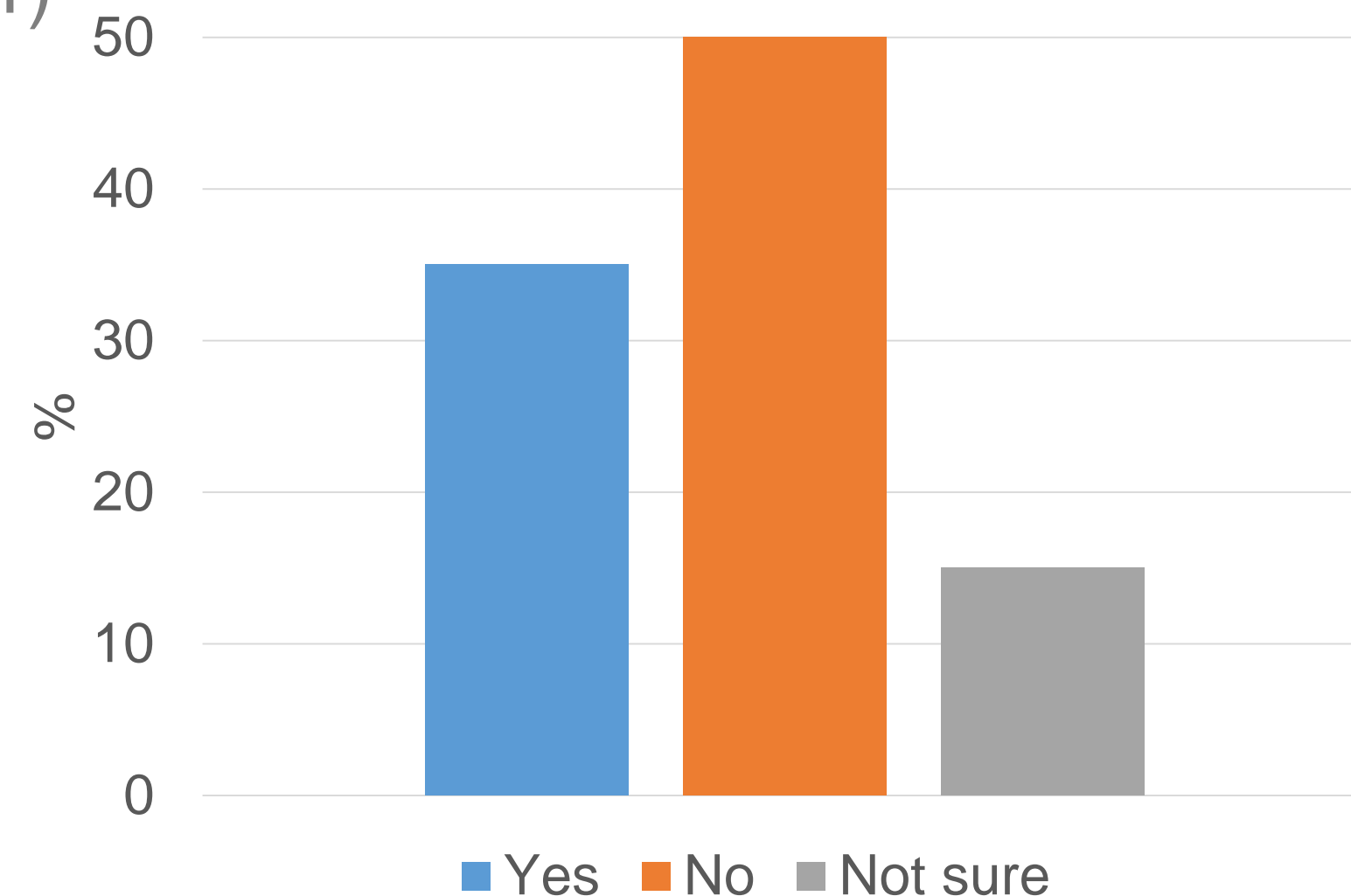
→ led to a situation of chronic arthrosis.

Intermittent limping, NSAID treatment inefficacious, evaluated by orthopedic specialists.

→ not considered to be objection for adoption
(based on evaluation of behaviour)

→ adoption family will be educated
by orthopedic specialists and
regularly followed up.

**Do you feel this
animal
is suitable for
rehoming?
(N = 43)**



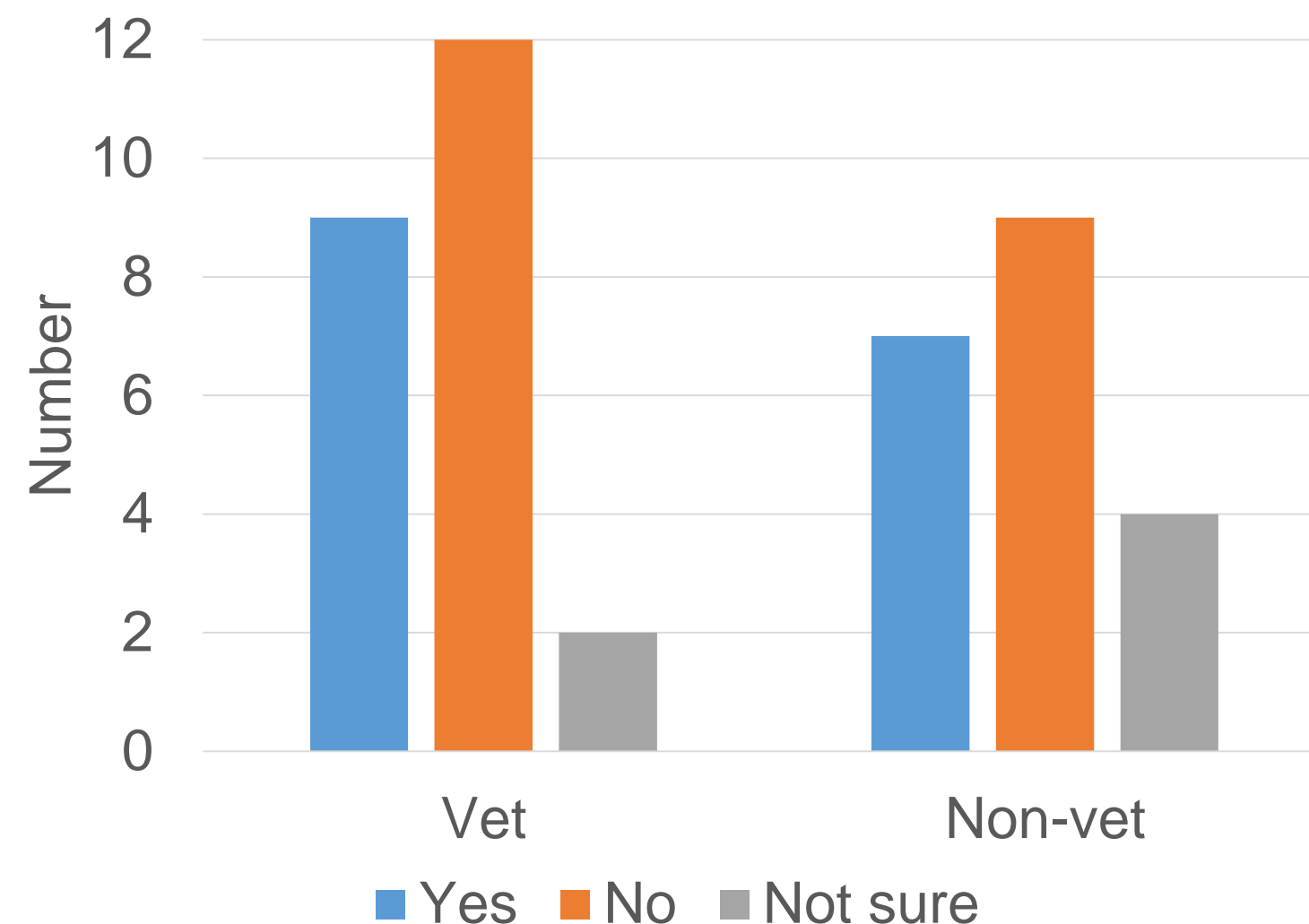
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Factors that play a role to decide (case study of beagles; Vangrieken 2022):

- Prognosis and life expectancy
- Management of discomfort + pain
- The adopter is a veterinarian or someone from the institute
- Mental burden of the adopter to care for the animal
- Expected costs (and who will bear them)

The difference between environments pre and post rehoming



Animalresearchdebat
e.idebate.org



www.pratsite.fr



www.amazon.co.uk



K. Hermans



bunnyapproved.com

The expectations of
the potential adopter

- Potential adopters may be expecting too much...
 - Rescuing an animal → the animal will be “grateful”
 - The animal will behave like other animals they had before
- ...or not enough
 - The animal will not need more time investment than any other pet animal

- In pet dogs and cats, **incorrect owner expectations** about animal behaviour or time investment exist (Marder and Duxbury 2008)
- Unrealistic expectations contribute to **relinquishment** (Patronek et al. 1996)
- Shelter dogs that require additional training because of behaviour problems (e.g., fearfulness or adjustment issues), are **less attractive** to adopters (Sietou et al. 2014)
- Having **better knowledge** of animal needs and required time investment promotes realistic expectations (O'Connor et al. 2016)

The cost of rehoming



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- Several costs involved
- Prior to rehoming
 - Maintenance of animal
 - Medical procedures (e.g. neutering, tooth care, hoof care...)
- After rehoming:
 - Maintenance, preventive and curative veterinary care
- Costs will vary greatly according to species
- Ideally, cost is considered in study planning and funding
- If cost is for adopter: inform thoroughly and in advance

DECISION WHETHER AND WHEN TO REHOME

– **WHETHER**

- Timing of decision
 - Facilitate transition
 - Fate indicated in project application
- National legislation and Supplier conditions
- If not suitable:
 - Internal rehoming
 - Euthanasia

– **WHEN**

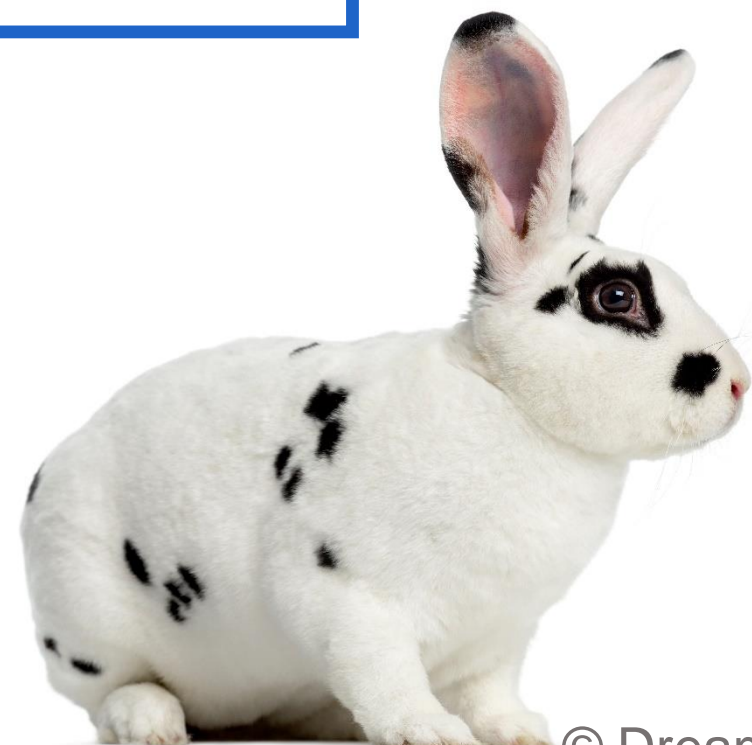
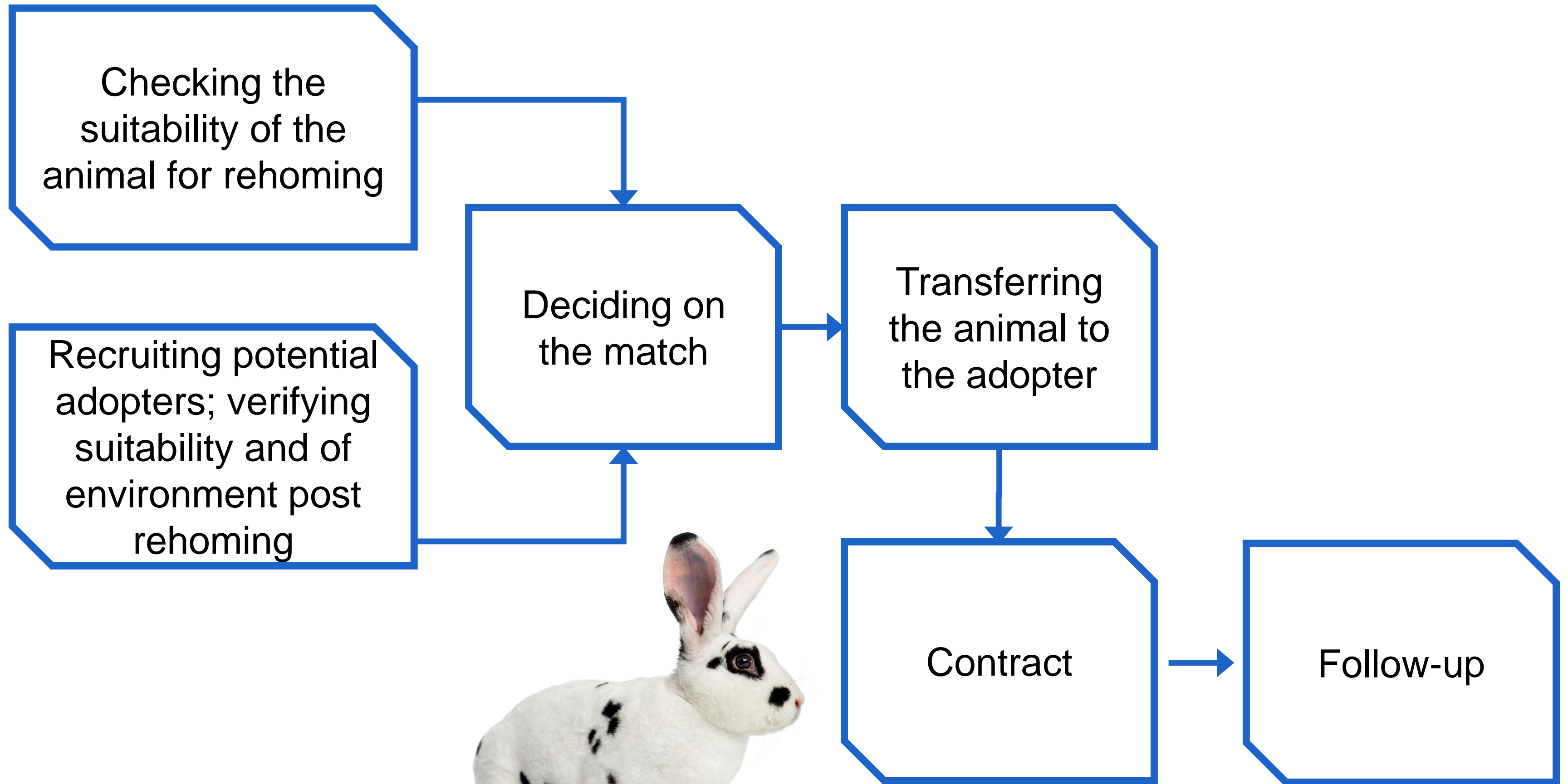
- Further suitability as research animal
- Age ↔ appeal
- Current and expected physical and mental health state
- Cost of keeping versus rehoming

SOCIALISATION

- **Broadly defined:**
Learning about species, individuals and the environment
- **Result:**
 - The animal can be relaxed in the presence of and during interactions with conspecifics and others
 - The animal can cope with its environment and the changes therein
- Begins at the breeder, must continue at the establishment
- Non-threatening & animal has control



STEPS IN THE REHOMING PROCESS



REHOMING AT THE FACULTY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE GHENT UNIVERSITY

Year	Dog	Cat	Horse / Pony	Rabbit	Chicken	Minipig	Goat	Cockatiel	Dab	TOTAL
2015	12	4	5	4	6	-	-	70	-	101
2016	9	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
2017	7	2	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	14
2018	12	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
2019	6	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	11	26
2020	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
2021	19	2	4	1	-	2	1	-	-	29
2022*	10	2	5	-	-	2	-	-	-	19
TOTAL	79	14	27	5	10	4	1	70	11	221

REHOMING OTHER THAN DOGS AND CATS

- Questionnaire by caretaker
- Clinical exam and blood exam
- Questionnaire by potential adopter
- Review:
 - Animal Welfare Body
 - Ethical Committee (including designated veterinarian)

INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM LAB

– Example Horse:

- Lab information + contact
- Description of animal to be rehomed
- Experimental manipulations the animal was subjected to
- Health and behavioural status

INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM LAB (CONTINUED)

- Current housing
 - Dimensions
 - Bedding
 - Turnout time
 - Contact with other horses
 - Feed
 - Specific care
 - Can the horse be ridden
 - What frightens the horse
 - Positive aspects of the animal
 - Problematic aspects of the animal
- Invitation to provide additional information

INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM ADOPTER

– Example Horse:

- Family composition
- Other animals
- Husbandry conditions (type of housing, pasture, fencing, water supply, feed..)
- What is expected of the horse
 - Riding, pasture horse, reproduction, other
- Experience with owning horses

CONCLUSION

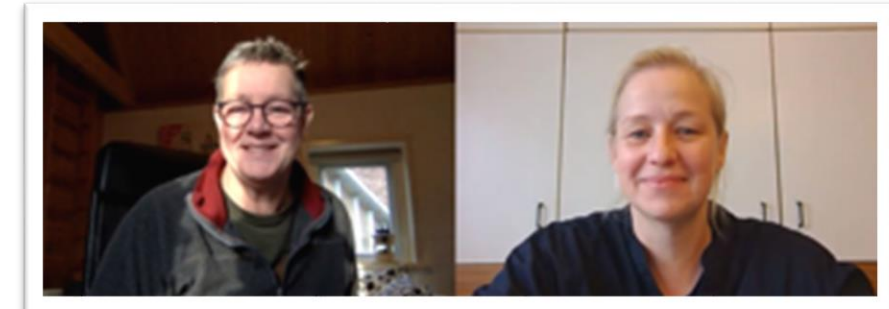


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- Rehoming can be a good fate for animals used or intended to be used for scientific purposes
- Process requires careful planning, involvement of several participants and appropriate resources
- Support and contingency measures post rehoming needed

Thank you for your attention!

Any questions?



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