

Rehoming of former laboratory animals

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The aim of the advisory report 'Rehoming of former laboratory animals' by the Netherlands National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (NCad) is to guarantee the quality of life of non-human primates (NHPs), dogs and cats that remain alive at the end of an animal procedure. The terms 'putting up for adoption' and 'retiring' are often used for such situations. In its advisory report, the NCad uses the term 'rehoming', by which is meant that, remaining alive at the end of an animal procedure, an animal is able to spend the rest of its life at a location suitable for its needs without being subjected to any further animal procedure. Based on the viewpoint that these animals have intrinsic value and should therefore always be treated as sentient beings, one should assume that all dogs, cats and NHPs kept alive (the 'yes, unless' principle) are being rehomed.

Various options exist in the Netherlands for rehoming a former laboratory animal. Establishments offering these opportunities develop their own guidelines and procedures. To establish a coordinated and transparent rehoming process, NCad has drawn up a framework that provides a general description of the rehoming process applicable to several different types of animals. In addition, species-specific Codes of Practice have been established for dogs, cats and NHPs.

To encourage the rehoming of eligible cats, dogs and NHPs and to create a coordinated rehoming procedure, the NCad set up recommendations with regards to: 1) the encouragement of the adoption of the CoP on cats, dogs and NHPs in practice; 2) the encouragement of a change of attitude within the field, whereby at the end of an experiment animals do not need to be euthanized and can in principle be rehomed, beginning with dogs, cats and NHPs; and 3) the creation of an environment where various parties endeavour to facilitate rehoming, including a balanced division of the attendant costs.

There are also situations in which, for good reasons, rehoming is not an option. These include: 1) The experiment requires the animals are killed because, for example, an autopsy provides essential information; 2) Reuse is possible, compatible with legal guidelines, and ethically acceptable, with consideration having been given to cumulative distress; 3) Laws and regulations prohibit rehoming, for reasons such as risk to public health; or 4) The Animal Welfare Body (IvD) and designated veterinary physician have good reason to believe that the quality of life and life expectancy of the animal will be too low following rehoming.

This poster will give an overview of the advisory report and CoP by the NCad.

Reference

<https://english.ncadierproevenbeleid.nl/advice/documents/publications/16/7/19/adoption-of-former-laboratory-animals>