



## Department of Primary Industries

### ANIMAL RESEARCH REVIEW PANEL

#### Research Animal Rehoming Webinar - Q&A

31 May 2022

The rehoming of animals that have been used in research and teaching is encouraged wherever possible, and where it is in the best interests of the animals being rehomed and public safety. Successful rehoming requires a coordinated and cooperative approach, and it is important that research establishments, rehoming organisations, animal welfare organisations and veterinarians work together to achieve an appropriate outcome for animals at the end of their use in research.

<b>When deciding to rehome do you recommend that the institution should physically visit/audit the rehoming organisations facilities?</b>	
Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	We work on a foster-adopt model, we don't have physical premises or a shelter. Allowing people access to volunteer's homes can present privacy issues, as we are not permitted to release, for instance, people's address details they provide to us when they register as a volunteer. We can on some occasions provide live video calls where we can show sites we are using to house animals in foster care.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	Most rehoming groups operate as a community foster care network (CFCN) meaning that they're unlikely to have facility as such. In that instance you wouldn't be able to visit the careers homes, but you should definitely meet with the rehoming group in person. At BFA we do have a facility, which is also our private home. We don't often have visitors to the sanctuary, but it is available on special request/circumstances. We also have an information pack that we send to any prospective facility that outlines what we do, with photos of the property and the facility. And we prefer to have at least one in-person meeting when signing up a new facility.
Carlee Mottley (Animal Rehoming Coordinator)	Inspection of rehoming facilities is difficult because most third-party rehoming services privately foster their animals prior to rehoming, rather than house the animals at a rehoming facility. If the research institution wishes to view the housing or husbandry conditions of animals prior to rehoming them this can usually be facilitated through the supply of photos a virtual walk-through/video call.
<b>How do you approach questions from potential owners who ask what research the animals were involved in or where they were located?</b>	
Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	If asked this question, we say that we are not permitted to provide details on the animal's situation prior to coming into our care but we do provide all information that is relevant to their ongoing care. We rely on the information provided by research establishments, using the standard form in our rehoming agreement, that asks for a range of information. For example, we need to know if an animal has been administered a tick anti-serum in the past, whether they have been vaccinated, are currently taking any medications, or suffer from any ongoing conditions such as arthritis, and how this has been treated in the past. The form in our rehoming agreement

	also asks for any details from their veterinary check prior to leaving the research establishment that would be relevant for their care, such as a recommendation for teeth cleaning etc.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	Our usual response to this is that we don't have access to information about what research they were used in, but that it is nothing that would prevent them from being a happy and healthy pet. The adoptive family does get told the animal is from a research facility, but as for where are they from, we wouldn't disclose that information. It's like adopting any animal whether it's from a pound or rehoming group, you don't get the name or address of the previous owners.
<b>Do your organisations require animals to be desexed before they are rehomed?</b>	
Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	We prefer cats, dogs and rabbits to be desexed, but it is not essential. This also relates to how many animals are being considered for rehoming. If it is a large number, then we would prefer them to be desexed before leaving the research establishment or we may require time to raise the funds necessary to cater for a large group. It's also possible for the research establishment to contribute to the costs associated with desexing animals – this includes the cost of the veterinary work but also the costs of housing and caring for the animal in foster care while vet work is completed. We do not routinely desex guinea pigs, rats or mice. However, there are some benefits in desexing rats if research establishments wanted to consider this, as it can result in greater longevity and less health issues such as mammary tumours.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	Yes. Every animal must be desexed before it's rehomed or placed into foster care. If they are not already desexed at the facility, then we'll make sure that it's done before placing them.
<b>What would generally be the youngest and oldest ages you would rehome an animal?</b>	
Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	We require young animals to be weaned and independent of the parent, unless they are being rehomed with the parent. In terms of limits on age, we don't really have any. We work closely with research establishments to understand each animal's situation and discuss whether they would achieve good quality of life outside the research establishment. We always allow leeway in this assessment as animals often behave differently outside of a research setting. For example, dogs often behave more positively once they are outside a kennel or shelter type of environment which can be highly stimulating and stressful for some dogs. Rats and mice often respond more positively to being housed in environments where they have more space and the opportunity to exhibit a broader range of natural behaviours.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	The youngest is anything from 8 weeks old, and we have no limit on the oldest age. If they're healthy and have a good quality of life ahead of them, we will find them the perfect retirement home.
Carlee Mottley (Animal Rehoming Coordinator)	The majority of animals that we rehome are young, due to the nature of the research we conduct. However, we have also rehomed fit and healthy animals in their mid to late stages of life.
<b>When would you consider euthanasia of an animal instead of rehoming?</b>	

Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	Liberty Foundation provides a “no-kill” service and believes that physically healthy and behaviourally sound animals that are suitable for adoption should not be euthanised. We do accept that in certain circumstances, euthanasia of an animal in our care may be unavoidable due to health, behavioural or legislative reasons. In those cases, euthanasia would only be carried out by a registered veterinarian. Liberty Foundation works closely with research establishments to determine the suitability of each individual animal for rehoming prior to their release, which reduces the likelihood of situations arising where euthanasia would be required. Once animals are adopted it is the responsibility of the owners to make decisions around euthanasia but given the close relationship we have with many of our adopters, they often consult us around such issues. As part of our adoption agreement, we also offer to take back any animal/s into our care if the owner can no longer look after them or wishes to relinquish them for any reason.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	If the animal is suffering medically in a way that can't be helped by modern science, we would consider euthanasia. If they have no quality of life, then we will consider euthanasia after in-depth consultation with our vet and after exhausting every possible option for that animal. We don't euthanise fearful or scared animals, we have an amazing rehabilitation program in place for them and have seen every single animal thrive with a 100% success rate.
Carlee Mottley (Animal Rehoming Coordinator)	If an otherwise healthy animal is deemed unsuitable for rehoming due to temperament or genotype, we always consider the possibility of retaining the animal for researcher training (such as training in animal handling or blood sampling) or as a companion to another animal rather than euthanasia. The only time that euthanasia may be considered is if an animal has a significant or non-treatable health condition that has been deemed by our facility Veterinarian to impact the animal's future quality of life.
<b>Are you able to assist rehoming animals from or to interstate?</b>	
Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	Yes, we can rehome from interstate in most cases, it just depends on the needs of the species and the numbers. We do require notice however of interstate rehoming opportunities as they require more planning and discussion with the research establishment and potential foster carers and adopters.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	Yes – BFA operates Australia wide. We can facilitate releases from interstate and adoptions take place interstate as long as the animals are fit and well enough, both physically and emotionally, to make the journey and that everything is done with the animal's best interest at the forefront.
<b>What type of communication goes back from the rehoming organisations to the AECs and organisations?</b>	
Paula Wallace (Liberty Foundation)	We provide whatever communication is requested. Generally, we are not requested to provide ongoing communication to the Animal Ethics Committee (AEC), it's usually with our contact at the research establishment, the person who is primarily coordinating the rehoming process. Most often we provide texts or emails with images, videos and written updates on animals in our care. On occasion we are requested by AECs to provide a presentation at one of their meetings on the progress of any rehoming activities, which we are happy to do.
Nikki Steendam & Tam Burke (Beagle Freedom Australia)	At BFA we keep in close contact with our facilities. We email updates regularly; we often send vet reports if the facility vet had a concern or particular interest in something – a dog with special needs for example. We also have an online private gallery of photos and videos. We make up digital albums and send them to the staff to see how the animals are progressing in their new homes.

Carlee Mottley (Animal Rehoming Coordinator)	We receive regular updates from our third-party rehoming service once the animals leave our facility, including photos and videos. The updates inform us about how the animal is settling in, if there have been any health or behaviour issues since leaving the facility, and if an animal passes away. Over the years these updates have allowed us to troubleshoot any problems with integrating the animals into their new homes, and they have helped us to refine our transition program to ensure that the adaptation to home life is smooth with minimal negative impact to the animals.
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**For more information:**

Liberty Foundation - <https://www.libertyfoundation.org.au/>

Beagle Freedom Australia - <https://www.beaglefreedomaustralia.org/>