

First rehoming of laboratory dogs in Finland successful but required a great deal of work

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Researchers at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Helsinki monitored the success of rehoming 16 laboratory beagles in 2015-2018. Credit: Andreas Arbelaez/Unsplash

The rehoming of laboratory dogs was the first of its kind in Finland. The

rehoming process was started with months of practicing basic pet dog skills with the dogs and by familiarizing them with the world outside the laboratory.

The practice period lasted from four to six months, depending on the dog.

"However, we found out that the socialization time was not quite sufficient for all [dogs](#); owners reported that some dogs continued to be timid and suffer from separation anxiety. The [laboratory](#) dog rehoming process would be smoother if in the future laboratory dog facilities separated out the defaecation and rest areas, gave dogs access to an outside area and walked them outside on a leash," says Docent Marianna Norring from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Helsinki.

The dogs had been living in packs of eight dogs for two to eight years in the University's laboratory animal facilities, from where they had daily access to an enclosed outside space. They spent the nights in smaller groups of dogs.

At the University, the dogs had participated in both [animal cognition](#) and veterinary medical studies. The cognition research provided basic information on canine minds, and a new tranquilizing agent suitable for dogs was developed in the veterinary medical study. The University of Helsinki does not currently have laboratory dogs.

The rehoming of laboratory dogs was implemented as a collaboration between SEY Animal Welfare Finland and the University of Helsinki. A large group of individuals participated in socializing the dogs and acquainting them with life outside the facility: animal caretakers, researchers, animal-rights campaigners and dog trainers. The aim was to take into account the individual characteristics of each dog when

searching for a new home for them. Whenever possible, dogs were rehomed in pairs. Generally speaking, the new owners have been extremely happy about their new pets.

More information: Laura Hänninen et al, The First Rehoming of Laboratory Beagles in Finland: The Complete Process from Socialisation Training to Follow-up, *Alternatives to Laboratory Animals* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/0261192920942135](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261192920942135)

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