

Re-use, collection of tissues, and rehoming

Table of contents

1	Introduction	2
2	For whom is this policy intended?	2
3	Why has this policy been drawn up?	2
3.1	Re-use	3
3.2	Tissue collection.....	3
3.2.1	Tissue collection: what is an animal experiment?	3
3.2.2	Tissue collection: what is not an animal experiment?	3
3.3	Rehoming and adoption	4
3.4	Euthanasia.....	4
3.5	ATEX	4
	'In practice'	5
4	What do you need to do?	5
4.1	Making an animal from research or education available	5
4.1.1	Registrering surplus animals (live)	5
4.1.2	Expressing interest	5
4.1.3	Transfer	5
4.1.4	Temporary retention	6
4.2	Collection of tissues	6
4.2.1	Registration of vital tissue	6
4.3	Rehoming of an animal	6
4.3.1	Publishing available animals.....	7
4.3.2	Adopters	7
4.3.3	Animal health	7
4.3.4	Transfer	7
4.3.5	Rehoming of rats	7
4.4	Euthanasia of an animal.....	8

1 Introduction

Utrecht University (UU) and UMC Utrecht are striving to minimize the number of animals that must be killed without having been put to a meaningful use for research and/or education. Where animals do not need to be killed following breeding, experiments, or education, they may, subject to certain conditions, be re-used, have vital tissue collected, or be rehomed through adoption. This policy outlines the available options and the conditions that must be met.

This policy concerns the possible destinations for surplus animals. The term 'surplus animals' refers to animals who have been used in experiments, education or from breeding and are unsuitable or no longer suitable for their originally intended purpose. These may be animals from an animal study or educational project where it is not necessary to euthanise them upon completion. Animals from breeding activities are also included, for example, parent animals that need to be replaced after some time or offspring that are unusable due to their sex or genetic background.

2 For whom is this policy intended?

The internal requirements set out below for matching the supply and demand of surplus animals for research or education are mandatory for staff at Utrecht University (UU) and UMC Utrecht. External parties that rely on UU and/or UMC Utrecht for the collection of material must also comply with this policy. Exceptions can only be made in consultation with the Animal Welfare Body Utrecht (hereafter: AWB).

3 Why has this policy been drawn up?

The aim of this policy is to:

- Encourage the use of surplus animals in research and/or education;
- Clarify the conditions under which surplus animals may be used for tissue collection;
- Create clarity about what action to be taken if surplus animals are not suitable for (re)use in research and/or education;
- Facilitate the rehoming of surplus animals.

Utrecht University and UMC Utrecht try to prevent the creation of surplus animals as much as possible (see [policy on the acquisition and breeding of laboratory animals](#)). However, this cannot always be avoided. This policy therefore describes how we deal with these animals in a responsible manner:

1. Re-use
2. Collection of tissues
3. Rehoming and adoption
4. Euthanasia

3.1 Re-use

Re-use is defined as using animals for an experiment after they have already been used in another experiment. The Experiments on Animals Act (Wet op de dierproeven or 'Wod') permits laboratory animals to be reused for research or education if:

- The actual discomfort in the previous experiment was 'mild' or 'moderate'.
(Exception: animals that suffered severe discomfort in a previous experiment may only be re-used for the collection of post-mortem tissue or if they are used in a non-recovery experiment.)
- The animals' general state of health and well-being has been fully restored since the previous experiment.
- The expected severity of discomfort caused by the new trial is classified as 'mild', 'moderate' or 'severe'.
- The procedures are conducted in accordance with veterinary recommendations.

3.2 Tissue collection

When reusing tissues, the legal requirements for re-use under Article 1e of the Animal Experiments Act must be met. Use the [decision tree](#) to determine whether this constitutes an animal experiment (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 for conditions).

Sometimes researchers can use tissues¹ from animals that have already been or are being collected for another purpose, and no separate licence is required. However, it is not always clear when an animal experiment is or is not taking place and which conditions then apply.

3.2.1 Tissue collection: what is an animal experiment?

Collecting tissues for research or educational purposes is considered an animal experiment if the tissue is collected:

- a) from a living animal, when there is no veterinary indication, and if one or more procedures that cause discomfort are involved;
- b) from a laboratory animal on which a procedure (such as injection or perfusion) is performed shortly before it is killed with the purpose of making the tissue optimally suited for the envisaged research or education, even if this procedure is performed under terminal anaesthesia;
- c) when the interested party determines the method and/or time of killing of the animal, because it is necessary for the condition of the tissue being collected.

3.2.2 Tissue collection: what is not an animal experiment?

Collecting tissues for research or educational purposes is not considered an animal experiment if the tissue is collected:

¹ The term 'tissues' refers to any type of biological material derived from animals, such as blood, cells, tissue, organs, lymph, cerebrospinal fluid, exudate, hair, urine or faeces.

- a. from an animal slaughtered for food production;
- b. from a (farm or pet) animal that has been killed in routine veterinary practice on veterinary grounds;
- c. on veterinary indication from pets or farm animals, and that can also be used for research or education;
- d. from an animal that was found dead;
- e. from an animal killed as part of an experiment with a different research question;
- f. from an animal killed because it was surplus and could not be re-used or rehomed (note condition 3.2.1.c);
- g. without causing the animal any discomfort (e.g. clipping fur).

3.3 Rehoming and adoption

We use the term 'rehoming' when an animal is taken to a shelter, and 'adoption' when an animal goes to a private individual. When we refer to 'rehoming' hereafter, we mean either rehoming or adoption.

When an animal is no longer suitable for research or teaching, for example due to illness, old age, or behaviour, the AWB assesses whether it can be rehoused or whether euthanasia is necessary.

We aim to rehome animals that can no longer be used in research or teaching.

3.4 Euthanasia

The AWB may order surplus animals to be euthanised or slaughtered in the case of farm animals. This applies if the animal is unsuitable for re-use, no interested parties have come forward within two weeks, there is no interest in the animal or its vital tissues, or when rehoming is not possible.

3.5 ATEX

The Animal and Tissue Exchange Platform ([ATEX](#)) is a website displaying the supply and demand for animals, organs, and tissues, primarily within Utrecht University and UMC Utrecht.

The exchange of live animals between facilities is often not possible due to differences in microbial status. This is only possible in consultation with the designated veterinarians at both locations.

Upon registration, the AWB will check whether you have an Article 9 or 13f2 registration. If you do not have one, please discuss your registration with the AWB first.

If a match is found, both parties and the AWB will be notified. The AWB will then evaluate whether all conditions for re-use and license have been met. The procedure is described in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2. Please also watch the [instructional video](#) for further explanation.

‘In practice’

4 What do you need to do?

4.1 Making an animal from research or education available

The protocol specifies whether animals will become available as surplus animals at the end of an experiment and whether they may be eligible for rehoming. If so, the AWB, the Study Director (SD) or Principal Investigator (PI) and the contact person at the animal facility will make arrangements together. These cover, among other things, temporary accommodation, costs, responsibilities, and any procedures involved in the transfer.

The researcher or owner must notify the AWB when the animals will become available well in advance of the end of the experiment. The AWB assesses, if necessary, in consultation with the designated veterinarian or other experts, whether the animals are suitable for (re)use in research or education, or for rehoming.

Re-use in education or research is usually preferred over rehoming. This prevents the breeding or purchase of new animals. Even re-use in a non-recovery experiment may be preferred over placement as a pet, as this avoids the need to breed or purchase a new animal for the purpose of killing it. This is in line with the principle of reduction (the R of the 3Rs).

In exceptional cases, deviations may be made to this rule, always in consultation with the AWB, for example in the case of well-trained or highly socialised animals.

Below is the procedure for registering, transfer and temporarily retention of surplus animals via the Animal and Tissue Exchange Platform (ATEX).

4.1.1 Registering surplus animals (live)

Live surplus animals must be registered in ATEX. To do this, you must create an ‘offer’ (*Submit offer, type: animal*) containing all relevant information about the animal and the date on which it becomes available. It is best to do this well in advance of the trial’s end date. Registering in good time increases the likelihood of re-use.

You can also check under ‘requests’ to see if there is already an active search for your animal. If so, you can bring this to the attention of the relevant researcher or lecturer (*Connect to my offer*).

4.1.2 Expressing interest

If a researcher or lecturer is interested in an animal offer, they can request a ‘match’ on your ‘offer’. In this request, the researcher or lecturer specifies how many animals are needed and for what they will be used. Both parties and the AWB will receive an email notification. As soon as an ‘offer’ and a ‘request’ are linked, a match is automatically created.

4.1.3 Transfer

Based on the match and the information provided, the AWB assesses whether the animals can be made available for the proposed purpose.

If there are multiple interested parties, the AWB weighs up the arguments, such as the purpose of re-use and the expected discomfort. The AWB then allocates the animals to a single researcher.

The AWB then informs the laboratory animal facility that the animals may be released. The facility arranges the administrative transfer in consultation with the study director or researcher. Any fees are agreed upon in consultation between the former and new owner.

4.1.4 Temporary retention

Availability and transfer are coordinated as closely as possible. In exceptional cases, suitable animals may be held for a maximum of two weeks. The AWB ensures that this remains limited and is in line with the expected demand. The new owner bears the costs of housing the animals. If, unexpectedly, no new owner is found, the licence holder bears the costs.

4.2 Collection of tissues

If tissue collection forms part of an animal experiment, the researcher must hold a project licence with a work protocol describing the tissue collection, or submit a notification to the CCD (see the website '[Notification, application for amendment or new application for animal experiment](#)'). This applies in particular to additional procedures under non-recovery anaesthesia that do not already take place in another experiment.

If the researcher does not have its own project licence, the AWB will assess whether the umbrella licence [AVD10800202418603](#) (*Gebruik van bloed, organen en weefsels voor het verbeteren van de kwaliteit van dierproeven en van in vitro- en ex vivo-onderzoek*) can be used. These experiments are aimed at improving the quality of research and education and at applying the 3Rs. Anyone wishing to make use of the umbrella licence must notify the AWB by completing and submitting the [work protocol](#) and accompanying decision tree.

4.2.1 Registration of vital tissue

It is also possible to offer vital tissue in ATEX. If only one or a few tissues are used during an experiment, you should offer the remaining organs as 'vital tissue' (*new offer, type: vital tissue*). State the animal species, age (at the time of euthanasia), which organs you are using yourself, and the place and time of euthanasia.

In this case, interested parties will contact the donor directly. No match is made via ATEX, and permission from the AWB is not required.

4.3 Rehoming of an animal

If an animal is not eligible for re-use in research or education but is suitable for rehoming, the AWB initiates a rehoming process. If the rehoming is coordinated by the department from which the animal originates, the department requests the rehoming agreement form from the AWB and coordinates the rehoming with the AWB. The designated veterinarian and, where necessary, other

experts assess the animal's suitability. They also screen prospective owners. The AWB decides on the allocation and arranges the transfer in consultation with the researcher and the management team or the laboratory animal coordinator.

4.3.1 Publishing available animals

The AWB collaborates with researchers and animal facility staff to find a suitable rehoming home. Internal and external channels are used for this purpose. The extent of the publicity depends on the species, the number of animals and other practical facts.

4.3.2 Adopters

Prospective adopters can contact the AWB via adoptie.ivd@uu.nl. Adopters must meet certain conditions, such as providing proper care, not engaging in breeding activities, and being able to cover the costs of veterinary care. Additional conditions may apply, such as the animal remaining available as a blood donor. Adopters must sign a consent form upon receiving the animal.

4.3.3 Animal health

A general veterinary examination takes place prior to rehoming. Any health issues are recorded in a health certificate by the vet or other experts.

For animals with a condition or illness, their suitability for rehoming is assessed first. Key factors include: age, general health, behaviour, previous treatments, and the expected quality of life. The animal does not need to be completely healthy, but the new owner must be able to care for the animal with the condition responsibly. The vet or other expert will draw up advice on the care of the animal.

4.3.4 Transfer

Upon rehoming, a Rehoming Agreement is completed and signed by the AWB staff member or designated vet and by the new owner. The health certificate forms part of the agreement. The department will send a copy of the signed rehoming agreement to the AWB, when the transfer is not processed via the AWB. Sometimes an animal is placed on a trial basis first to get used to the new environment. Once signed, the new owner is fully responsible.

4.3.5 Rehoming of rats

The AWB has a structured program for the adoption of rats, including a waiting list and collaboration with three rat shelters. The AWB first assesses interested adopters via email or telephone. As soon as the rats are available, the adopters are informed by the AWB, and the handover takes place upon signing the rehoming agreement. If no adoption home is available, the rats are rehomed at a shelter or via other licensed organisations with a rehoming program.

4.4 Euthanasia of an animal

If an animal is unsuitable for rehoming – for example, due to a condition, genetic modification, infection, or abnormal behaviour – euthanasia is chosen. In the case of farm animals, if the law permits, a decision may also be made to have the animal slaughtered. Even when no new owner can be found, euthanasia or slaughter will be chosen.

The AWB decides, in consultation with the laboratory animal coordinator, the daily animal caretaker and the study director or other relevant officials, whether to proceed with euthanasia.

Document type:	Policy document
Author(s):	Animal Welfare Body
Co-reviewers:	IvD Utrecht Sounding Board Group
Person with final responsibility:	Head of AWB
Client:	Licence holders Wod UU and UMC Utrecht
Date of approval	
Portfolio holder for Wod UMC Utrecht:	01-05-2026
Portfolio holder for Wod UU:	01-05-2026
Effective date:	
Document version:	1.0
Revision date:	
Revision notes:	1.0 Merge of policy documents; Tissue Collection 2.0 and Surplus Laboratory Animals, Re-use & Relocation of Laboratory Animals 2.2