

Table 1: List of questions and answers included in the online survey distributed through Google Forms®, and frequency of each response within the sample of 49 respondents

Q	What types of animals does your organisation deal with?	
A	Domestic/companion animals 41	Wildlife 1
	Both 7	
Q	How would you describe your organisation?	
A	Small Independent Rehoming centre	13
	Small Independent Rehabilitation centre	2
	Regional Charity Rehoming centre	8
	Regional Charity Rehabilitation centre	1
	National Charity Rehoming centre	8
	National Charity Rehabilitation centre	3
	Other	14
Q	Do you ever treat/house rabbits?	
A	Yes 48	No 1
Q	Do rabbits undergo any health checks/physical exams, either by a vet or other member of staff, whilst at the site?	
A	Always	40
	Usually	5
	Approx. Half the time	1
	Occasionally	2
	Never	0
Q	Are any methods used to reduce stress whilst handling the rabbits?	
A	Always	29
	Usually	12
	Approx. Half the time	0
	Occasionally	7
	Never	0
Q	Are towels or hoods used to cover rabbits' heads/eyes during handling or examination?	
A	Always	6
	Usually	5
	Approx. Half the time	4
	Occasionally	20
	Never	13
Q	Are towels or hoods used to cover rabbits' heads/eyes during transportation in a vehicle or whilst carrying across the site?	
A	Always	9
	Usually	9
	Approx. Half the time	1
	Occasionally	4
	Never	25

Q	Do you use any other methods to reduce stress in rabbits during transport or examination?			
A	Always			16
	Usually			12
	Approx. Half the time			0
	Occasionally			10
	Never			9
Q	Do you exclusively treat/house rabbits?			
A	Yes	18	No	30
Q	Are towels or hoods used to cover the heads/eyes of species other than rabbits, either during transport or handling?			
A	Always			2
	Usually			5
	Approx. Half the time			0
	Occasionally			13
	Never			11
Q	Please select all animals concerned:			
A	Badger 5	Deer 4	Cat 16	Raptor 6 Other 7
	Fox 5	Hedgehog 4	Dog 9	Other bird species 9
Q	Do you use any other methods to reduce stress in species other than rabbits during transport or examination?			
A	Always			8
	Usually			8
	Approx. Half the time			1
	Occasionally			10
	Never			4
Q	Please select all animals concerned:			
A	Badger 2	Deer 1	Cat 18	Raptor 2 Other 4
	Fox 3	Hedgehog 4	Dog 12	Other bird species 6
Q	If you use towels or hoods to cover the head/eyes of any species, please give the main reasons for use :			
A	To immobilise the animal			9
	To reduce stress in the animal			35
	To prevent injury to staff			14
	Other			3
	Towels and hoods aren't used			11
Q	If you don't use towels or hoods to cover the head/eyes, why is this?			
A	Unnecessary / not needed			19
	Other methods are used			10
	Blindfolding deemed ineffective			6
	Other			6
	Towels and hoods are used			19

Table 2: Distribution of rabbits within groups

	Variable	Blindfold	Swaddling	Control
Cohort				
	1	5	6	3
	2	2	2	2
	3	2	2	2
	4	5	5	4
Weight (kg)				
	Mean ± SE	2.88 ± 0.375	1.99 ± 0.208	2.96 ± 0.497
	Range	1.5 – 6.6	1.1 – 3.8	1.4 – 6.2
Sex				
	Male	4	6	5
	Female	10	9	6
Housing				
	Shed & run	7	6	3
	Indoor run	5	3	3
	Outdoor run	0	2	0
	Hutch	1	4	5
	Hutch & run	1	2	4
Number of hutch mates				
	0	1	4	5
	1	8	9	6
	2	5	2	0
Breed				

Unknown cross	6	4	1
Dwarf	1	1	0
Giant	0	0	2
Giant lop	2	0	0
Lionhead	0	4	2
Lionhead x lop	1	0	0
Lop	3	3	6
Rex	1	3	0

Table 3: Behavioural variables during components of the test

Test Component	Variable name	Definition
Hutch Approach	Response to Experimenter's Hand	Total number of different positive behaviours (including approach, come out of hiding, contact, show no response, sniff hand, turn towards experimenter)
		Total number of different negative behaviours (including freeze, thump, withdraw, hide)
Capture	Negativity of capture	Total number of different negative responses in response to experimenter's attempt to capture / pick up rabbit (as above plus, bite, scratch, kick, struggle intensely, struggle slightly, vocalise and could not capture)
		Positive behaviours (including approach and carry on as before)
	Latency to capture	Time taken to pick up rabbit (from moment experimenter entered enclosure / opened hutch to moment rabbit was securely placed in carrier in seconds)
Transfer	Time to Transfer to Novel Arena	Time taken to transfer rabbit from enclosure / hutch to novel arena (seconds)
Novel Arena	Latency to move	Time taken for rabbit to move once placed in the novel arena (seconds)
	Number of squares moved into	Number of squares traversed by the rabbit for one minute (before experimenter enters)
	Number of rears	Number of rears performed whilst the rabbit was in the novel arena (before experimenter enters)
	Number of different negative behaviours when alone in novel arena	Total number of different negative behaviours (including freeze, thump, escape, frantic to get out, scratch at corners and vocalise)
	Number of positive behaviours observed when alone in the novel arena	Total number of different positive behaviours (including explore, groom, rear, lie stretched out, sit and sniff)

Response to Carrot Pre-treatment	Pre-treatment proximity to carrot	1= Furthest corner; 2= 2-3 squares away; 3= 1 square away, 4= same square; 5= contacts or eats carrot
Experimenter enters novel arena	Positivity of response when experimenter in novel arena	Number of different positive behaviours (including approach, lie down, climb on experimenter, carry on as before, sit alert, sniff, contact experimenter) minus number of different negative behaviours (escape, thump, freeze, vocalise, withdraw)
Treatment Application	Time taken to apply treatment	Number of seconds required to securely apply blindfold or swaddle
	Negativity of response to application of treatment	Total number of different negative behaviours shown (including, bite, scratch, kick, can't be applied, chew fabric, freeze, struggle slightly, struggle intensely, tense but no struggling, thump, vocalise)
Handling	Positivity of response to handling	Rating of level of acceptance whilst being handled for 2 minutes 0 – 4: 0= can't be handled or escapes, 1= chew treatment fabric, struggles intensely, or vocalises, 2= freeze or struggles slightly; 3= tense but no struggling 4= appears relaxed with no struggling
	Level of restraint required	Degree of restraint required for most of the 2 minutes handling 1= sits un-held, 2= held loosely, 3= held firmly, 4= held tightly
	Subjective Calmness	Assessment of level of calmness whilst being handled: 1= very calm-5= very nervous
	Post-treatment proximity to carrot	1= Furthest corner; 2= 2-3 squares away; 3= 1 square away, 4= same square; 5= contacts or eats carrot,
Number of escape attempts		Total number of escape attempts whilst within the novel arena and during handling

Table 4: Results of Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney U tests, comparing variables between treatment groups

Test Variable	Day	Mean (and Std. Error)			<i>P</i> value for Kruskal Wallis test	<i>P</i> value for Mann Whitney U test
		Blindfold	Swaddling	Control		
Capture						
Latency to capture (seconds)	1	80.83 (21.376)	75.85 (16.048)	90.82 (25.276)	0.902	
	5	43.58 (9.294)	55.85 (9.669)	65.82 (11.311)	0.289	
Change in latency to capture (seconds)		-29.43 (15.094)	-10.13 (20.371)	-25.00 (26.223)	0.922	
Novel Arena (with marked squares for observing movement)						
Number of squares moved into	1	8.08 (1.644)	5.15 (1.484)	12.27 (2.479)	0.022	0.012 (Swaddling & Control)
	5	5.00 (0.862)	5.00 (1.585)	3.91 (0.707)	0.550	
Change in number of squares moved in to		-3.86 (1.217)	-0.50 (1.020)	-8.36 (2.721)	0.037	0.017 (Swaddling & Control)
Number of positive behaviours observed when alone in the novel arena	1	2.58 (0.193)	1.92 (0.211)	2.55 (0.167)	0.043	0.047 (Swaddling & Control) 0.029 (Blindfold & Swaddling)
	5	2.42 (0.260)	1.69 (0.237)	2.36 (0.244)	0.080	
Pre-treatment proximity to carrot (1 = furthest; 5 = contact)						
Proximity to carrot (1 to 5; 5 = contact)	1	2.75 (0.351)	2.69 (0.365)	2.91 (0.456)	0.911	
	5	2.67 (0.414)	2.77 (0.378)	3.18 (0.400)	0.510	
Change in proximity		-0.08	0.08	0.27	0.341	

		(0.557)	(0.415)	(0.557)		
Treatment Application						
Time taken to apply treatment	1	48.42 (4.461)	40.77 (4.160)	79.82 (20.834)	0.034	0.011 (Swaddling & Control)
	5	38.67 (2.343)	39.69 (7.294)	41.45 (2.681)	0.156	
Negativity of response to application of treatment	1	1.33 (0.256)	1.15 (0.191)	1.00 (0.000)	0.335	
	5	0.92 (0.149)	1.08 (0.137)	1.18 (0.122)	0.413	
Handling						
Positivity of response to handling (0 to 4; 4 = most positive)	1	2.50 (0.195)	2.31 (0.365)	1.91 (0.392)	0.294	
	5	2.00 (0.302)	2.62 (0.266)	1.55 (0.390)	0.037	0.033 (Swaddling & Control) 0.022 (Blindfold & Swaddling)
Change in positivity		-0.50 (0.337)	0.31 (0.308)	-0.36 (0.310)	0.252	
Level of restraint required (0 to 4; 0 = least restraint)	1	2.08 (0.229)	1.54 (0.144)	2.18 (0.263)	0.072	
	5	1.67 (0.225)	1.38 (0.140)	2.00 (0.191)	0.059	
Change in restraint		-0.42 (0.288)	-0.15 (0.191)	-0.18 (0.263)	0.790	
Heart rate (beats per minute)	1	213.33 (5.817)	225.38 (5.385)	211.82 (9.517)	0.535	
	5	215.83 (5.568)	213.85 (4.317)	208.18 (5.012)		
Change in heart rate		2.50 (6.643)	-11.54 (5.529)	-3.64 (8.767)	0.535	
Respiratory rate (breaths per minute)	1	151.67 (7.671)	144.62 (11.855)	155.45 (11.067)	0.423	

	5	139.17 (8.299)	141.54 (12.134)	160.91 (11.237)		
Change in respiratory rate		-12.50 (10.160)	-3.08 (10.277)	5.45 (15.513)	0.881	
Post-treatment proximity to carrot						
Proximity to carrot (1 to 5; 5 = contact)	1	2.17 (0.366)	3.08 (0.309)	3.09 (0.415)	0.099	
	5	3.67 (0.376)	2.54 (0.215)	3.73 (0.304)	0.020	0.005 (Swaddling & Control)
Change in proximity		1.50 (0.417)	-0.54 (0.462)	0.64 (0.527)	0.031	0.008 (Blindfold & Swaddling)
Change in proximity to carrot before and after treatment Day 1		-0.58 (0.468)	0.38 (0.385)	0.18 (0.711)	0.341	
Change in proximity to carrot before and after treatment Day 5		1.00 (0.389)	-0.23 (0.389)	0.55 (0.337)	0.237	
Number of escape attempts Day 1		0.17 (0.167)	0.54 (0.243)	2.00 (0.726)	0.024	0.015 (Blindfold & Control)
Number of escape attempts Day 5		0.50 (0.261)	0.23 (0.166)	0.55 (0.282)	0.446	
Change in number of escape attempts		0.29 (0.286)	-0.29 (0.244)	-1.45 (0.731)	0.077	