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Rehoming of pet rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) in Sweden: an investigation of national advertisement

L Ulfsson, A Lundberg and M Andersson*

Department of Animal Environment and Health, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, POB 234, S-53223, Skara, Sweden

* Contact for correspondence and requests for reprints: maria.andersson@slu.se

Abstract

*Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are popular companion animals, yet there has been little research into rabbits kept as pets in Sweden. Many rabbits that are rehomed are done so via personal contacts rather than through animal shelters. The purpose of this study was to provide a picture as to why rabbit owners rehome their pets and to what extent this is done in Sweden. There were 505 rabbits put up for rehoming through a large Swedish advertisement site during the winter of 2012/2013. The most commonly stated reasons for trying to rehome rabbits were 'Lack of time' (35.8%), 'Owners are moving' (16.6%) and 'Allergies' (13.2%). The mean age of the rabbits was 17.6 months and most rabbits were put up for sale for a price of between €11.1 and €55. Requests about the new home were mentioned in 46.8% of the adverts and the majority of the comments described the type of home needed for the rabbit. Reasons for relinquishing rabbits were similar to those found in other studies and the number of rabbits with behavioural problems was very low (0.9%). We conclude that a number of rabbits in Sweden are experiencing rehoming and the effect of this on their welfare should be further investigated.*

Keywords: animal owner, animal welfare, behaviour, pet, rabbit, rehoming