

**Dissection FAQs**

**Importance of dissection**

Many educators strongly feel that there is no substitute for the hands-on, learning experience of dissection. Susan Offner, a former Outstanding Biology Teacher Award recipient, wrote that, "The learning that occurs in a dissection is qualitatively different from the learning that occurs in a lecture or paper-and-pencil setting. No model, no video, no diagram and no movie can duplicate the fascination, the sense of discovery, wonder and even awe that students feel when they find real structures in their own specimens".

The National Association of Biology Teachers states, "The NABT acknowledges that **no alternative can substitute for the actual experience of dissection** or other use of animals and urges teachers to be aware of the limitations of alternatives."

Furthermore, "Classroom experiences that involve nonhuman animals range from observation to dissection. NABT supports these experiences so long as they are conducted within the long established guidelines of proper care and use of animals, as developed by the scientific and educational community."

**Other reasons to dissect**

Dissection is also important because it:

* Helps students learn about the internal structures of animals.
* Helps students learn how the tissues and organs are interrelated.
* Gives students an appreciation of the complexity of organisms in a hands-on learning environment.
* Provides one of the most memorable and instructive units in a school biology course.

**Response to the claim that many animals used in research are stolen pets**

Animal activists prey on the emotions of pet owners. They falsely claim that pets are stolen and sold to medical research facilities and suppliers of animals for scientific research. According to the Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation, "There is no market for stolen pets in biomedical research. Well over ninety percent of the animals used in medical research are rodents. Dogs and cats account for less than one percent of the total number of lab animals needed by researchers."

The US Department of Agriculture, under the Animal Welfare Act, governs the procurement of animals. Carolina is proud to have an outstanding USDA inspection and compliance record, and we are committed to treating all animals in a humane manner.

**Sources for Carolina's dissection specimen**

Carolina obtains animals from many sources—some from cultures, some from natural or managed habitats where seasonal collections are made, and many from the food industry.

**Where does Carolina obtain the sharks and worms used for dissection?**

Many animals and organisms are dead when we purchase them. For example, fishermen supply fish and sharks, and the fishing bait industry supplies earthworms.

**Where does Carolina obtain the cats used for dissection?**

Animal shelters furnish euthanized cats that would be destined for the landfill were we unable to utilize them for science classrooms.

**Where does Carolina obtain the fetal pigs used for dissection?**

Abattoirs, producers of sausage, supply fetal pigs that would otherwise be considered offal and sent to the landfill.

**Where does Carolina obtain the frogs used for dissection?**

The current source for most preserved frogs for biology has an interesting history. Several decades ago, an area of desert was converted to farmland through irrigation. Man's changing of that land use also resulted in a large increase in the frog population in this area. One industry that emerged from this new resource is the provision of frog legs for food. A fraction of the grass frogs collected from that man-made habitat are preserved for biological study. Bullfrogs, however, are cultured specifically for use as specimens.

**What if a student objects to dissection?**

The NABT "encourages teachers to be sensitive to substantive student objections to dissection and to consider providing appropriate lessons for those students where necessary."

Other dissection resources

* [The National Association of Biology Teachers](http://www.nabt.org/)
* [Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation](http://www.amprogress.org/)
* [National Association for Biomedical Research](http://www.nabr.org/)
* [Research Defense Society](http://www.rds-online.org.uk/)
* [Foundation for Biomedical Research](http://www.fbresearch.org/)