

DYING TO LEARN

Exposing the supply and use of dogs and cats in higher education

Laura Ducceschi, MA, Director, Animalearn, Jenkintown, PA

Nicole Green, Associate Director, Animalearn, Jenkintown, PA

Crystal Miller-Spiegel, MS, Policy Analyst, AAVS, Jenkintown, PA



Abstract

Although Americans consider dogs and cats as household pets, many are harmed and killed for teaching and training purposes despite the availability of effective alternatives.

Based on a review of 92 U.S. public universities' records, 52% are using live or dead dogs in harmful teaching exercises in undergraduate life science, veterinary, and medical education, with 26% using live dogs and cats. A separate survey of university biology departments indicate that 63% of the respondents are using cat cadavers to teach anatomy and physiology.

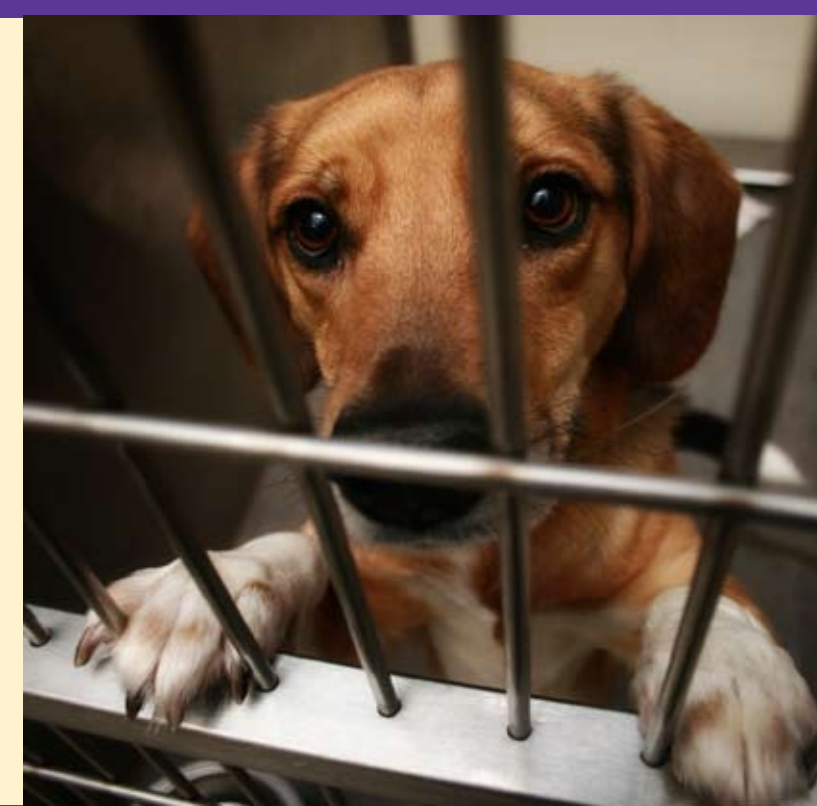
In specific cases, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs) are failing to provide effective oversight in ensuring adequate alternatives searches as required by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). Despite the intent of the AWA, dogs, cats, and other animals continue to suffer unnecessarily in university teaching labs in an effort to provide educational experiences for undergraduate, graduate, veterinary, and medical students.

Sources of dogs and cats for education include Class A (breeders) and Class B (those that acquire animals and resell them) dealers that obtain former pets from pounds and shelters. All classifications of dealers have been cited for repeat violations, including inhumane treatment, according to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) records.

A growing number of universities, however, are instituting policies that replace harmful animal use with pedagogically sound alternatives including virtual dissection, ethically sourced animals, and clinical veterinary treatment programs.

Status of Dogs & Cats under U.S. Law

In 1966, the AWA was introduced in large part to address concerns regarding the use of illegally obtained cats and dogs, many of whom were former pets, in experimentation. Today, under the AWA, cats and dogs, as well as other animals, are afforded basic legal protections related to their care and use. For example, investigators who want to use animals for research and teaching purposes must first consider alternatives to procedures likely to cause pain and distress and eliminate unnecessary duplication of animal use.



Methodology

To estimate the use of dogs and cats in higher education in the U.S., we queried public colleges and universities located in a sample of 24 states (175 institutions). Many of these schools also have veterinary and medical schools.

Data was acquired via three methods:

1. IACUC public records 2005-2007

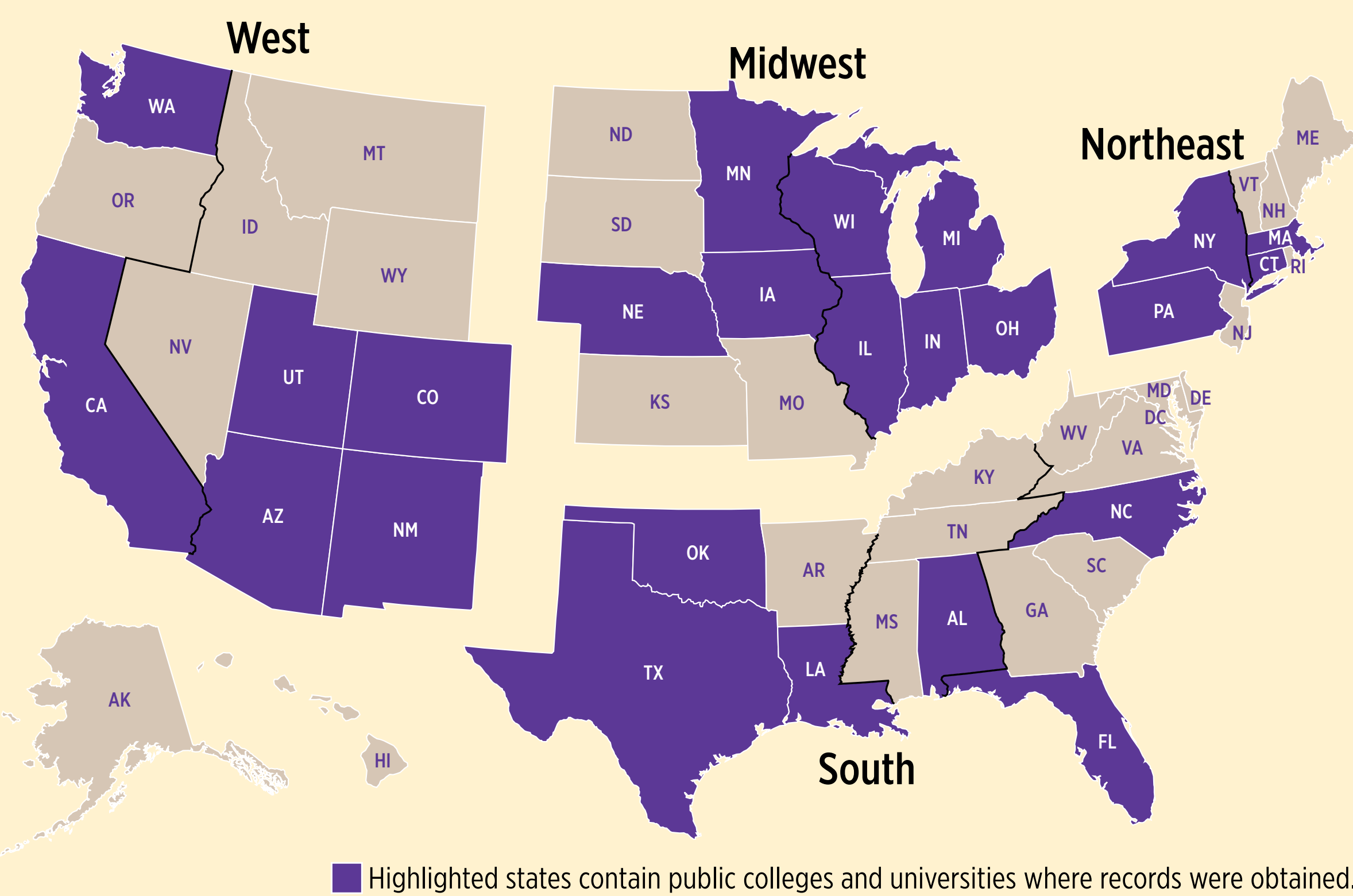
Information on the number and type of dogs and cats purchased or acquired for teaching purposes.

2. USDA inspection reports and license renewal applications

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to USDA for licensed Class A, and Class B dealers (random source and biological supply companies), to obtain information on sales of dogs and cats and records of regulatory violations.

3. Surveys of university biology departments

150 biology departments from 175 institutions regarding their use of live and dead dogs and cats, how they are used, and whether or not students are permitted to use other alternatives.



■ Highlighted states contain public colleges and universities where records were obtained.

Findings

1. Universities are harming and killing dogs and cats to fulfill educational objectives that can be met by alternatives.

Instances include terminal surgery labs at veterinary and medical schools, clinical skills training labs, and animal dissection. Many animals are killed specifically for students to use, even though viable alternatives are being implemented successfully at other universities.

2. Of 92 university records reviewed from 2005-2007, 52% are using live or dead dogs and cats, and 26% are using live dogs and cats.

3. Of 150 university biology departments surveyed in 2008 (20% response rate), 63% are using dead cats to teach anatomy and physiology.

4. Universities are acquiring dogs and cats from inhumane sources.

Animals are supplied by both Class A and Class B dealers, many of whom have a consistent pattern of AWA violations including falsifying records and providing inadequate animal care, resulting in suffering and distress. In addition, universities are going directly to animal pounds to acquire animals, through a process called pound seizure.

5. IACUCs are failing to provide effective oversight.

In-depth analysis of approved animal use protocols (AUPs) from selected university IACUCs indicates disregard of valid database search procedures for alternatives. Specifically, AUPs revealed patterns of 'canned' searches, incorrect and irrelevant search terms, and a limited range of database use, as well as misrepresentation of results.

Suppliers of Dogs and Cats Used in Education

College/University	Class A Dealer	Class B Dealer	Pound Seizure ¹
Colorado State University, Fort Collins	X		
Iowa State University			X ²
Michigan State University, East Lansing	X	X	X
Oakland University, Rochester	X		
Ohio State University		X	
Oklahoma State University	X	X	
Purdue University		X	
Texas A&M University, College Station	X		X
University of California, Santa Barbara	X		
University of Cincinnati	X		
University of Connecticut, Storrs	X		
University of Florida, Gainesville	X	X	
University of Georgia, Athens		X	X
University of Illinois, Chicago		X	
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	X	X	
University of Minnesota, St. Paul	X	X	X ²
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	X		
University of Oklahoma, Health Sciences Center		X	
University of Texas, Dallas ³	X		
University of Texas, Southwest Medical Center	X		
University of Washington, Seattle	X		
University of Wisconsin, Madison	X		

Class A Dealers

Dealers that breed animals on their premises.

Class B Dealers (random source)

Dealers that purchase and re-sell live and/or dead animals. USDA regulations state that a Class B dealer may obtain animals from random sources such as auction sales, other USDA-licensed dealers, pounds and shelters (where state law allows), and from private persons who have raised and bred the animal on their own premises (which could include animals offered in 'free to good home' ads).

Class B Dealers (biological supply companies)

Dealers that provide live and dead animals to classrooms and laboratories, blood supply companies/facilities that collect blood from animal colonies for veterinary medical use, and research/testing laboratories.

Pound Seizure

Pound seizure is the sale or release of live cats and dogs from a pound or shelter to a research, testing, or educational facility. Some definitions include provision of dead animals to facilities or dealers.

1. Pound seizure column includes live animals only.
2. These animals may have been used for beneficial spay/neuter surgeries and then returned to shelter.
3. Stopped using cats in 2008. No dogs used.

Recommendations

1. Create curricula that identifies alternatives as the default procedure in life science, veterinary, and medical education.

Incorporate humane science methodology, such as:

- RescueCrittlers manikins (e.g., Critical Care Jerry)
- Virtual dissection CDROMs (e.g., BioLab Cat)
- Surgical Simulation (e.g., Ohio State University School of Veterinary Medicine; Dr. Emad Aboud's Advanced Surgical Simulator)
- Sources include: Animalearn's *The Science Bank* free loan program, InterNiche free loan program

2. Institute educational programs that are beneficial to animals.

- Educational Memorial Programs (EMPs) for client donated cadavers
- Shelter Medicine Programs

3. Develop Institutional policies that promote humane practices.

- Student Choice Policies²
- "No Random Source Animals" Policies

4. Provide educators with training opportunities for identifying and using appropriate alternatives.

- Animal Welfare Information Center (USDA)
- Animalearn

5. Eliminate inhumane sources of animals used in education.

Pound Seizure

- Immediate U.S. prohibition on pound seizure

Random Source Class B Dealers

- Immediate elimination of Class B Dealer licenses at the federal level (Determined unnecessary by the ILAR committee)

Biological Supply Companies

- Should not be permitted to obtain animals from U.S. pounds and shelters.
- Should not be permitted to transport animals across international borders for sale in the U.S.
- USDA should consider them high-risk and inspect more frequently.

Class A Dealers

- Should not be considered the solution for educational use.

Case Study on Implementing Alternatives

In 2008, The College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) at the University of Georgia (UGA) required terminal surgery procedures in sophomore and junior surgery labs. During these procedures, a bowel resection was performed and the dog was euthanized at the end of the surgery. Veterinary students approached faculty regarding the option of offering alternatives in lieu of terminal surgery labs. Faculty requested more evidence to support the efficacy of alternative teaching methods.

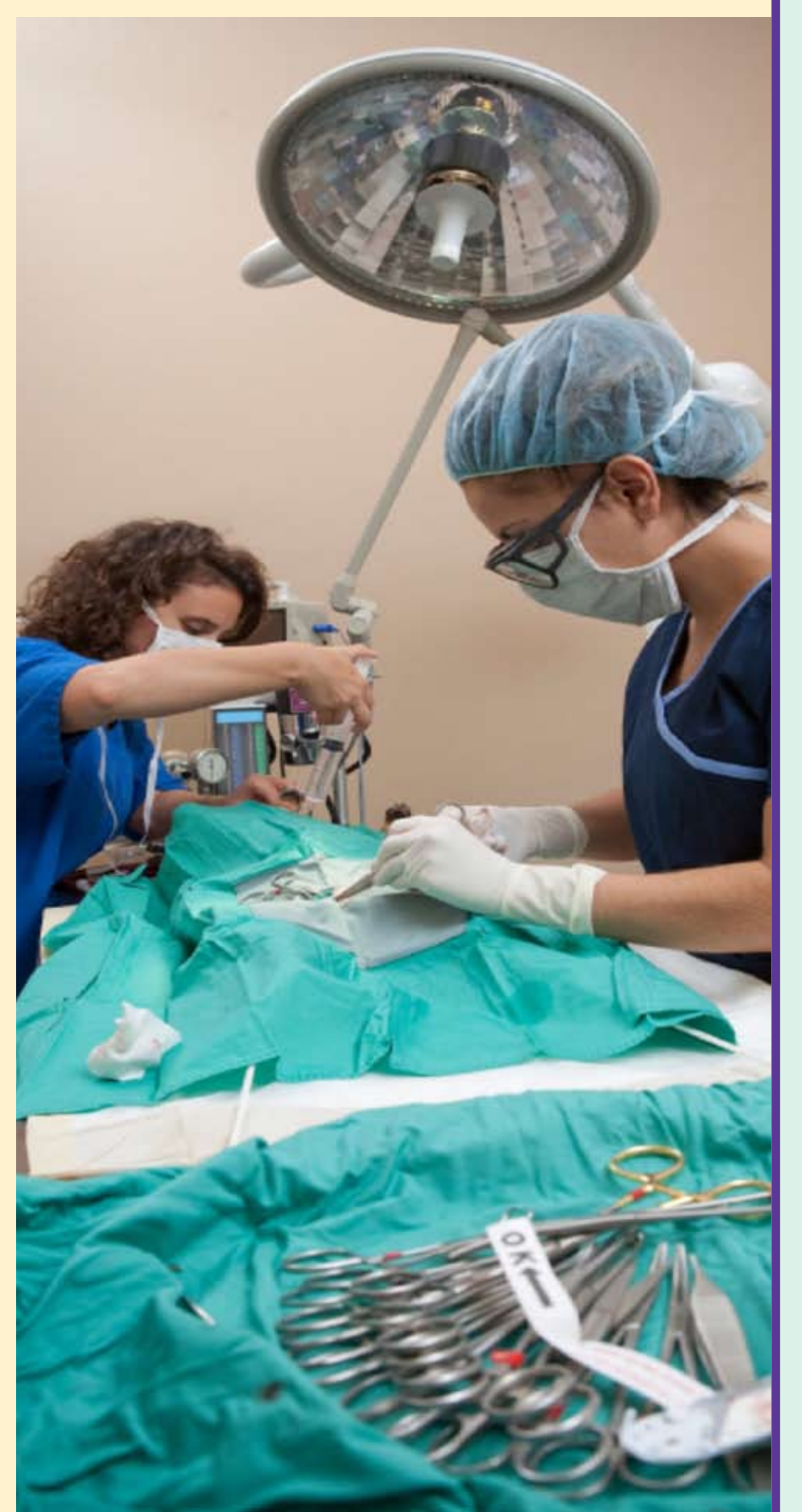
During summer 2008, veterinary students from the Animal Welfare Club presented a proposal to faculty regarding implementing a small animal Educational Memorial Program (EMP), since there was already an EMP in place for large animals. Faculty identified several obstacles, including insufficient freezer space to accommodate donated cadavers. Students responded by pricing the freezers; conducting a needs assessment between departments for willed cadavers; identifying sources of willed cadavers; writing a standard operating procedure and donor release forms; and developing an EMP brochure. Students were able to obtain a \$2,000 grant to help purchase new freezers. The small animal EMP should be established for fall 2009.

Students formed student/faculty committees to discuss improving the surgery curriculum, and students wrote grants to fund a DVD/digital media library of non-terminal (spay/neuter) surgical procedures for sophomore and junior surgery. In fall 2008, the surgical DVD/digital media grant was funded by Animalearn. The DVDs will be completed in time for the fall 2009 semester.

Students also wrote a grant to fund the development of a Shelter Medicine Program. Animalearn provided a grant to help UGA begin the program, and has since received more funding to support a fourth year senior spay/neuter rotation. The college sponsored its first Shelter Medicine seminar for shelter personnel in January 2009, and its first shelter medicine related didactic course on Forensics in spring 2009. Another course on Shelter Medicine will be offered in fall 2009.

The 2008-2009 junior and sophomore surgery lab curriculum eliminated the use of dogs for terminal procedures for the first time, but substituted pigs for the terminal canine procedure in each course. Faculty offered students the option of performing the terminal procedure on a cadaver dog (not ethically-sourced) in lieu of the pig. Only four students opted for the alternative cadaver procedure, while the majority of students (approximately 180) elected to perform the terminal procedure with the pig. This is an indicator of the importance in engaging the student population in the change process. The surgery faculty is reviewing ways to reduce or eliminate the terminal pig procedures for the forthcoming 2009-2010 curriculum.

Special thanks to UGA CVM student Ruth Usher. This is adapted from an article by her in the Spring/Summer 2009 AV Magazine



1. Crystal Schaeffer. "Over a Century of Change: AAVS Legislative and Regulatory Efforts." AV Magazine. Spring 2008. P.16

2. Laura Ducceschi, Lynette A. Hart and Nicole Green. "Guidelines for the development of student choice policies regarding dissection in colleges and universities: An ethnographic analysis of faculty and student concerns." AATEX 14, Special Issue. Proceedings from the 6th World Congress on Alternatives & Animal Use in the Life Sciences. August 21-25, 2007. P.273-276.