

Millions of us share our homes and hearts with cats. Sadly, however, cats are also commonly used as dissection teaching tools in classrooms nationwide.

HOW ARE CAT SPECIMENS OBTAINED FOR EDUCATION?

Biological supply companies sell science education materials to educators and schools, including live and dead animals. These companies are able to acquire euthanized cat cadavers from pounds, shelters, and/or random source dealers at a low cost, and then resell them to schools for up to 10 to 20 times that amount. In the shadowy world of animal dealers and “bunchers,” cats are obtained from pounds, auctions, private breeders, or “free to good home” ads. Dealers from Mexico have been documented selling lost, stray, or abandoned cats from streets and shelters to American biological supply companies. Ultimately, all parties involved profit from the tragedy of shelters being unable to find adoptive homes for all cats, some of whom are former pets.

WHAT ARE THE ETHICAL PROBLEMS WITH CAT DISSECTION?

- Euthanasia of cats in shelters and pounds is the result of complex societal issues, including uncontrolled breeding and overpopulation. The primary mission of shelters and pounds is to provide a safe haven for companion animals who have been surrendered or are lost. However, when animals are sold, including those who have been euthanized, it is a violation of the public trust and can lead to a conflict of interest.
- Some educators have reported finding microchips or toys in the cats they were dissecting, indicating that they were once someone’s companion.
- Countless inappropriate incidents have occurred while students were dissecting cats. For example, in an Oklahoma high school, students made their cat cadavers’ dance in an inhumane video that was widely viewed on the internet, forcing the school to react to a public outcry.



WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO USING CATS?

There are many hands-on and innovative alternatives available that can help students learn anatomy and physiology and that do not involve cat dissection. Some options include:

ANATOMY IN CLAY LEARNING SYSTEMS

ANATOMY REVEALED: THE CAT BY MCGRAW HILL

REALISTIC CAT MODELS

WHERE CAN I FIND THE LATEST CAT DISSECTION ALTERNATIVES?

Animalearn’s free loan program of dissection alternatives, The Science Bank, offers a wide variety of humane teaching tools that can replace dissection, including cat dissection software and realistic models.