

Dear Concerned Student,

By calling the Dissection Hotline, you've already taken the first step towards protesting animal dissection in college courses. This booklet is designed to help you take the next step down the path of a personal ethical decision.

Refusing to dissect animals can be a difficult choice. I know from experience. In 1987 my daughter, Jenifer, decided she didn't want to dissect a frog in her high school biology class. Jenifer's simple ethical objection spiraled into a two-year struggle to establish her right not to harm animals in the classroom.

In California, students in grades kindergarten through high school have now won the right to refuse to dissect, harm or kill animals—and the right to substitute an alternative project. I believe that college students deserve to have their rights respected, too.

I started the Dissection Hotline and designed this handbook to assist students in taking a stand on their beliefs about animal rights and humane education. I've also invited a lawyer from the Animal Legal Defense Fund (which sponsors the Dissection Hotline and provides legal support to students who object to dissection) to address some of the legal issues involved in your decision.

If after reading this booklet you have more questions about how to proceed, feel free to call me at our toll-free number, 800-922-FROG [3764].

Sincerely,

Pat Graham

Pat Graham
Director, Dissection Hotline



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To Dissect ... Or Object?

A Question of Conscience

When dissection was introduced into the educational curriculum in the 1870s, it was thought to be a good learning tool in the study of anatomy, physiology and the theory of evolution. Today, more sophisticated teaching methods have been developed which can replace dissection.

But dissection is a big business. Over 5.7 million animals a year are killed to be dissected for educational experiments. Many of these animals, such as chipmunks, frogs, sparrows, and snakes, are collected from their natural environments; in the process, their habitats are decimated and entire ecologies are threatened. Other animals, including mice, rabbits and pigs, are bred in cramped "factories" solely for the purpose of being killed later for dissection experiments.

But even more destructive is the desensitizing effect of mutilating and dismembering animals in the name of science and in the cause of "education." Somehow the study of a "life science"—meant to instill wonderment and respect for life—has become the science of death. Dissection teaches students that animal life is expendable and unimportant. As a result, some of the best potential scientists, who have a deep respect for animal life, may end up dropping out of a field they love because they refuse to take part in senseless killing.

Despite the availability of numerous educational alternatives (ranging from detailed models to computer simulations) animal dissection remains a fixture of most college biology, physiology, and zoology courses. Year after year, millions of animals die in U.S. college classes to demonstrate basic anatomy, which could easily be taught by other means.

Recently, students around the country have begun to speak out against this misguided practice. As student objections to dissection become more vocal and visible, the movement towards non-animal alternatives grows.

Every time a student exercises his or her right not to dissect animals, the awareness of the entire academic community—including professors, deans and fellow students—is increased. By exercising your right as a student, you can help create an environment where respect for animals is considered the norm.

