

Students Want Option to Cut Out Animal Dissection

Survey finds overwhelming majority of tweens and teens feel alternatives should be available

(October 9, 2007)—When it comes to dissection in the classroom, students want a choice. As in, the choice to say, “no thanks.” A recent survey initiated by Student’s Animal Guardian Alliance (SAGA), a project of Animal Welfare Trust, in consultation with The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), found that 86% of students think that they should be given the option to pursue their studies by using alternatives to animals.

“Every year countless students are forced to go against their own ethical code by dissecting animals in biology class,” says Ali Berman, project director for SAGA. “As the data from this survey shows, dissection alternatives should be offered in every classroom so no student has to compromise their beliefs for a grade.”

The survey, conducted in July 2007 by Teenage Research Unlimited, asked 20,000 11-18 year-olds about dissection. Other findings from the 4,187 respondents include:

- 79% say that they have been asked to dissect an animal in the classroom
- 52% would prefer to use an interactive computer program to learn anatomy
- 36% think that dissecting animals in classrooms is unethical
- 67% have not been given an alternative option

“Students today have many opportunities to study biology through interactive CD-ROMs, videos, and 3-D models, which have been shown to be less expensive and at least as effective (if not better than) dissections as teaching tools,” said Dr. Martin Stephens, The HSUS’s vice president for animal research issues.

Currently, nine states (Florida, California, Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Virginia, Oregon, and New Jersey) have laws that allow students in grades K-12 to choose an alternative that isn’t harmful to animals, without penalty. In most cases, parents and/or students must be notified of the choice prior to the exercise. Five other states (Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Mexico) have policies or resolutions that serve a similar purpose.

The HSUS offers the Humane Education Loan Program (HELP) to provide students and educators with up-to-date alternatives to classroom dissection and live animal experimentation. Groups like SAGA and The HSUS also assist students who are not given a legal choice to implement dissection policies in their school by advising them on how they can get alternatives written into their science curriculum.

Teens interested in dissection alternatives can visit the Mission: Humane section of humanesociety.org/teens to take action and request resources.

To participate in the free Humane Education Loan Program call 301-721-6439.

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Animal Welfare Trust is a private operating foundation serving to inform and educate on issues that compromise the welfare of animals with the purpose of promoting positive change. SAGA is a project of AWT that provides information and resources for high school students interested in creating a more humane society towards animals. You can visit SAGA at www.clubsaga.org.

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization – backed by 10 million Americans, or one of every 30. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education, and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty -- On the web at humanesociety.org.