American Association of Veterinary Anatomists

Official Position Statement on Release of Euthanized Animal Bodies
to
Commercial Dealers
for
Use in Teaching Medical Professionals

Adopted July 23, 2008 in College Station, Texas

The intrinsic value of cadaver dissection as the primary means of teaching anatomy has been long recognized and periodically re-confirmed by those responsible for the training of medical professionals. Although modern modalities, including computer-assisted learning and the use of plastinated specimens have supplemented dissection, the depth of knowledge expected at the professional level is still dependent on the careful dissection of cadavers— there is no satisfactory substitute. Dissection is critical to obtain knowledge of tissue dynamics, to understand three-dimensional relationships of structures, and to the application of diagnostic and surgical procedures.

Many colleges of veterinary medicine currently obtain their dog and cat cadavers from commercial dealers that are allowed access to freshly euthanized animals from various municipal and county animal shelters. These animal bodies are then embalmed and sold to the various veterinary colleges. These animals represent those that were not or could not be selected for adoption, and whose bodies were otherwise destined for disposal by incineration or burial. None of these animals were euthanized for the intended purpose of providing specimens for dissection.

The American Association of Veterinary Anatomists strongly encourages and promotes the continued release of animal bodies from various municipal or county animal shelters to commercial dealers so long as the following procedures are strictly followed:

- (1) That procurement be limited to non-adopted and non-adoptable animals that have been euthanized, checked and pronounced dead by the shelter personnel; and

- (2) That any payment from the dealer to the shelter be nominal and would in no way provide a financial incentive for the shelter to ever choose euthanasia over adoption.