Guidance for Dissection Lessons in the Agriculture Classroom

Dissection lessons are a common component of many agricultural education programs and coursework. These lessons provide meaningful, authentic, hands-on learning experiences to students that supplement numerous agriculture units and topics. Agricultural Education courses in New York are encouraged to include rigorous content that encompasses the study of animal systems, including, but not limited to the areas such as life processes, health, nutrition, genetics, management and processing, as applied to small animals, aquaculture, livestock, dairy poultry, and veterinary science techniques. During such a lesson, it is essential to ensure that safe dissection practices are followed to prevent injury or illness. For this reason, the following guidelines have been developed to aid programs in the development of their relevant lesson planning.

It is encouraged that all agriculture program who include dissection lessons as part of their curriculum establish consistent safety procedures with their district, and inform students, parents, and guardians of such procedures so that lessons can be conducted successfully. An alternative assignment must be offered for students who wish to not participate in such a lesson.

Considerations when conducting dissection lessons in the agricultural classroom:

- Ensure the laboratory/workspace provides adequate lighting and ventilation for all students and is free of any personal belongings, food, or equipment not necessary for the lesson.
- Ensure that all workspaces, equipment, and dissection tools have been properly cleaned and sanitized before and after the lesson.
- Ensure proper storage, sanitization, and handling of dissection specimen/s before, during, and after the lesson. The specimen/s should be properly disposed of upon completion of the lesson. Most specimens will not be classified as federal hazardous waste or biohazards, and therefore can be disposed of as regular waste destined for a landfill. Specimens should be double-bagged and sealed before being placed in the trash.
    - If a domesticated animal specimen is donated (not purchased from a vendor) to a school or program, ensure the same safety procedures developed by the district/program are followed to prevent injury or illness throughout the lesson. In the case of wildlife specimens, it is strongly encouraged to contact DEC prior to accepting a wildlife specimen outside of a vendor.
- Ensure students have access to and properly use personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the lesson, including gloves, safety glasses or goggles and an apron or lab coat.
- Ensure that students are instructed to wash hands properly before and after the lesson, and anytime during the lesson when deemed appropriate.
- Ensure that safety instructions or procedures are discussed with and demonstrated to students prior to the lesson. It is also encouraged to discuss potential risks involved in conducting dissections such as zoonotic disease.
- Ensure that students are properly supervised during the lesson.

For additional assistance, or questions, please contact the following:

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