

Guidelines for Responsible Use of Animals in the Classroom

The National Science Teachers Association Position Statement

These guidelines are recommended by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) for use by science educators and students. They apply in particular to the use of non-human animals in instructional activities planned and/or supervised by teachers who teach science at the precollege level.

Observation and experimentation with living organisms give students unique perspectives of life processes that are not provided by other modes of instruction. Studying animals in the classroom enables students to develop skills of observation and comparison, a sense of stewardship and an appreciation for the unity, interrelationships and complexity of life. This study, however, requires appropriate, humane care of the organism. Teachers are expected to be knowledgeable about the proper care of organisms under study and the safety of their students.

These are the guidelines recommended by NSTA concerning the responsible use of animals in a school classroom laboratory:

- Acquisition and care of animals must be appropriate to the species.
- Student class work and science projects involving animals must be under the supervision of a science teacher or other trained professional.
- Teachers sponsoring or supervising the use of animals in instructional activities—including acquisition, care and disposition—will adhere to local, state and national laws, policies and regulations regarding the organisms.
- Teachers must instruct students on safety precautions for handling live animals or animal specimens.
- Plans for the future care or disposition of animals at the conclusion of the study must be developed and implemented.
- Laboratory and dissection activities must be conducted with consideration and appreciation for the organism.
- Laboratory and dissection activities must be conducted in a clean and organized work space with care and laboratory precision.
- Laboratory and dissection activities must be based on carefully planned objectives.
- Laboratory and dissection objectives must be appropriate to the maturity level of the student.
- Student views or beliefs sensitive to dissection must be considered; the teacher will respond appropriately.

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