

## Dissecting bulls' eyes

Within SSERC we have received a number of enquiries recently about health and safety concerns about the dissection of animal materials both in terms of what is permissible and where such materials can be sourced. In particular we regularly receive enquiries about dissection of bulls' eyes. Information on complying with legislation that includes the dissection of bulls' eyes in schools is contained within the document *Materials of Living Origin* which can be accessed from the SSERC website ([www.sserc.org.uk](http://www.sserc.org.uk)). As a result of recent changes in legislation the Code of Practice *Materials of Living Origin* has been reviewed and updated copies will be sent to all Member schools in the autumn term of 2012.



As a result of the Animal By-Products (Scotland) Regulations 2011 the position is now as follows:

- Eyes from cattle, sheep and goats less than 12 months old at slaughter may be supplied and used for educational purposes such as dissection. Previously the restriction was for cattle less than 6 months old at slaughter. Such materials may be disposed of in the normal way for animal (food) waste. Eyes from other species (e.g. from pigs or fish) may be used in the same way.
- Abattoirs may now also supply eyes from cattle, sheep and goats that are more than 12 months old at slaughter. The brain and spinal chord (including eyes) of these animals are designated as SRM (specific risk materials). The risk here is of transmission of TSEs (transmissible spongiform encephalopathies such as BSE and nvCJD) although the risk of such animals carrying the infective agent for TSEs is now considered to be low. The legislation is designed to control the risk of such materials entering the food chain. Previous cases of TSEs were considered to be

due to including these waste animal tissues in animal feed. The risk of transmission in dissecting eyes is low and is effectively controlled by normal laboratory practice. However, SRM materials must be disposed of by incineration. The supplying abattoir will provide the school with a simple form to complete to obtain permission for the abattoir to supply the material. This form requires the school to make arrangements for the incineration of the materials after use. The abattoir or the local authority environmental health service should be able to advise on suitable premises for incineration. The school should keep a record of the material obtained and of its disposal.

Although eye dissection lends itself to learning about structure and function, eyes more generally provide a rich source of other practical work that can be used to develop scientific skills of experimental design and data analysis making for more integrated and connected learning rather than an isolated one off experience. In a subsequent issue of the Bulletin we will publish some hints and tips on successful eye dissection. ◀

## Radioactive sources - gaunnae no dae that?

Not only do we sometimes speak differently here in Scotland, the law governing the purchase of radioactive sources is different too. In England, if you wish to buy a radioactive source, no letter of approval from the government is required. This is not the case north of the border, though some equipment suppliers have been telling buyers otherwise.

As a consequence, a small number of schools are holding sources that they should not have.

The bottom line: do not buy a radioactive source without first obtaining a letter of approval from the Scottish Government. Contact SSERC for guidance on the full process.