

Body parts and brains in demand

Lee Gailer | 11th February 2011

YOU can be forgiven for wanting to lock up your pets and guard the livestock when Deb Cook is around.

Her business Dissection Connection supplies schools with animal parts for the purpose of science.

The lab technician found a niche in the market early on in her career after discovering how difficult it was to find good specimens for dissection.

After placing an order with a local butcher for six eyeballs, 25 ox hearts and a pig's head, Ms Cook received them in good condition, which got her to thinking.

"Normally poor lab technicians would be sent down to their local butcher or abattoir to collect the specimens," she said.

"It's a horrible job taking them back to the schools. In most cases they are packed in boxes that leak blood, or in containers that spill.

"It's also very hard to get specimens in good condition – they usually have knife cuts through them or have been slashed into pieces."

When Ms Cook landed a job as a lab technician at Tin Can Bay State School about five years ago, her first job was to collect specimens for dissection. Little did she know this would lead her to establish her own business.

"Good specimens are so hard to get, especially in (the cities).

"When I found a butcher who understood what I was after, I realised I could make a business of delivering quality specimens to schools all over Australia.

"The only issue was how we were going to transport the product. We thought we would need a refrigerated truck but it turned out the specimens survive the distances because of the packaging."

The animal parts are vacuum-sealed in individual packets and frozen, then packed in Styrofoam boxes to be delivered by local courier, Vickie Young, of Fastway Couriers.

Business grew quickly from two chest freezers to a freezer room within a matter of months of operating, and orders have been placed by schools from Cairns to Melbourne.

Dissection Connection is believed to be the first business in Australia to supply schools with animal parts and abattoirs "love the idea" of not having to deal with individual schools.

The orders Ms Cook places with them are now a lot larger: 80-odd kilograms of hearts were delivered yesterday for sorting and packing, with any specimen deemed not worth dissecting, rejected.



Deb Cook, of Dissection Connection, arranges the delivery of animal body parts to schools for dissection by science students.

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