

Oregon Owl Pellets

Owl Pellet Dissection Guide 2023

The Owl Pellet Lab

Not sure how to start your Owl Pellet Dissection Lab or just need a refresher? Start here and use this *FREE Owl Pellet Dissection Guide* to help you get going.

What Is An Owl Pellet? A Very Brief Explanation.

After swallowing its food whole the Barn Owl relies on its Gizzard to help it digest. After swallowing bones, fur, and all, the Gizzard separates out what the Owl cannot digest. Several hours later, after the Gizzard has finished its job, the Owl regurgitates a Pellet or sometimes more than one. This pellet is a mass of all the indigestible bits that the gizzard separated.

At Oregon Owl Pellets our Pellets come from Oregon Barn Owls, we gather the pellets from our local area barns and other structures Barn Owls like to nest in.

Planning the Owl Pellet Dissection Lesson

1 – Gather Your Supplies and Materials

Supplies and Materials

The following will list the most common supplies but may not include everything you need for your lesson.

1. ***Owl Pellets, any size**
 - The most important part of your Pellet Dissection Lab.
2. **Tray or Plate**
 - You may need a larger one, depending on the size of the pellets.
3. ***Plastic Forceps/Tweezers And *Wooden Dissection Sticks**
 - For tearing apart pellets and pulling out bones.

4. Spray bottle or similar (optional)

- Note: A small amount of water can be used to soften the pellets prior to students opening them. This makes them easier to dissect and reduces the risk of breaking remains while opening the pellets.

5. Non-latex gloves or dish washing gloves

- A good reassurance for those who might be a little squeamish.

6. Facemask (Optional)

7. Owl Pellet Bone Chart (Recommended)

- Owl Pellet Bone and Dissection Chart helps students identify bones found in owl pellets.

8. Clean Desk or Table

- Like any lab, have adequate space for your students to work.

Things to keep in mind.

Rodent bones are the most common bone found in owl pellets. To avoid breaking those fragile bones, students should work slowly. This is when using water to soften the owl pellet can be very important. Put a little on each pellet.

“Remind your students not to put the Owl Pellet in their mouth. If they do, don’t worry, the sanitized pellets will not hurt them. However, it would be a good precaution to have them rinse their mouth with mouthwash afterwards.”

Dissection and Bone Collection

As your students begin dissecting the pellets, have them set aside bones or other remains they find. Sometimes this can include rodent skulls. Encourage them to identify what they find. For older students this may be easier so give them the added challenge of putting bones from the same animal together. We provide a free bone chart with the purchase of our Owl Pellets! Or you can download the free PDF at OregonOwlPellets.com/lesson-guide.