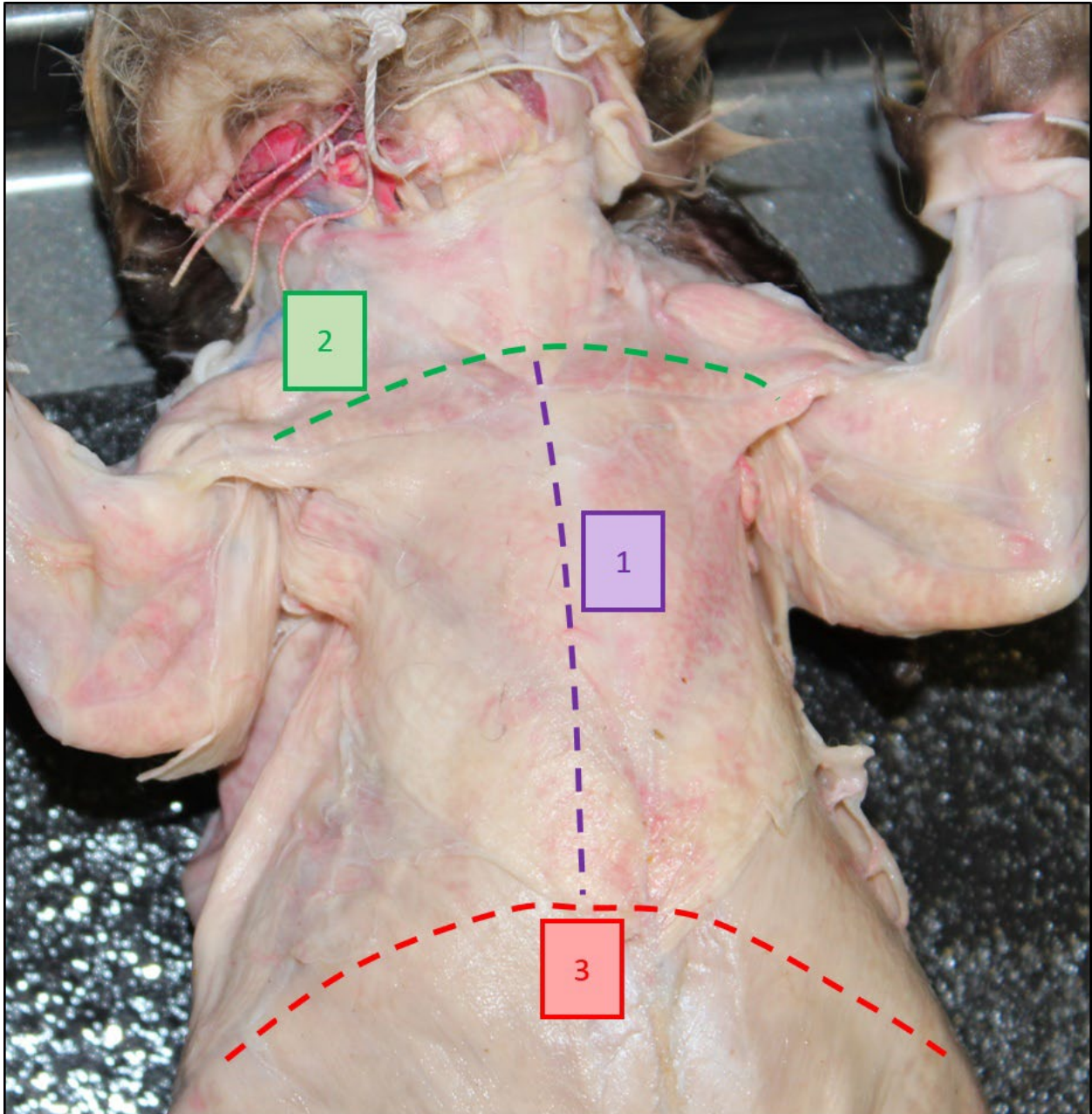


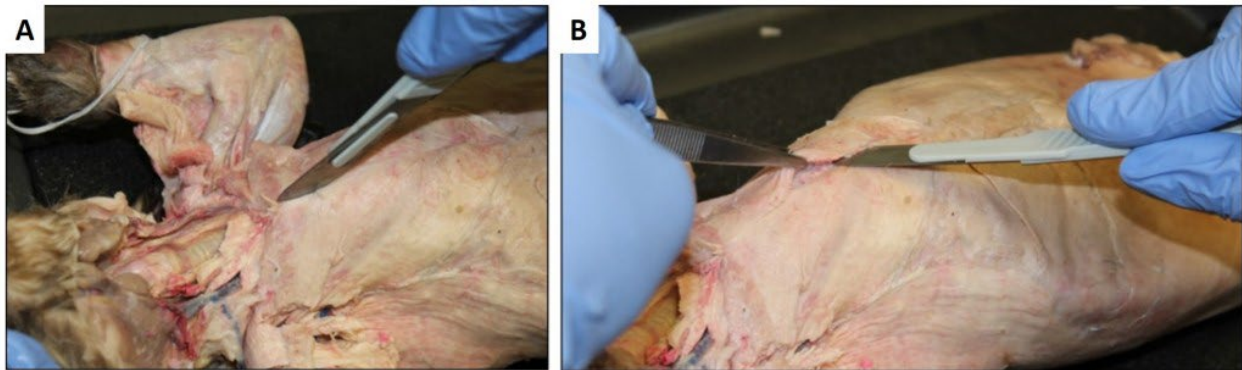
1. Figure 1 represents the incision guideline for this portion of the dissection. Be prepared as this is a lengthy process. Cut chest muscles and bone as needed in order to clearly see the underlying blood vessels and organs.



**Figure 1.** Incision guide for the thoracic cavity. The numbers in this figure are referenced in the steps below.

2. Make Incision 1 as shown in Figure 1 by using the scalpel to cut through the midline of the chest muscles; start at the most superior portion and cut inferiorly through the tissues that cover the sternum. Do not cut into the diaphragm. See Figure 2.

3. Make Incision 2 as shown in Figure 1 by using the scissors or scalpel to cut bilaterally and superiorly to the midline dissection completed in the previous step. Lift the tissue while making the incisions to ensure you do not damage any underlying blood vessels or the thymus gland.
4. Use the scalpel, tissue forceps, and scissors to separate the muscle tissue from the sternum and rib attachments, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Separating Muscle Tissue. **A.** Using the scalpel to cut through the chest muscles. **B.** Separating the chest muscles from the sternum.

5. Make Incision 3 as shown in Figure 1 by using the scissors to cut the inferior chest muscles diagonally from the xiphoid process to the bilateral sides of the rabbit, just above the diaphragm. Lift the tissue while making the diagonal cuts to ensure you do not damage any underlying structures, such as the diaphragm.
6. Using the scissors and tissue forceps, cut caudally through the clavicle, sternum, and xiphoid process of the rabbit, taking care not to damage the underlying organs and blood vessels by keeping the lower blade of the scissors as close to the inner wall of the thoracic cavity as possible. See Figure 3.

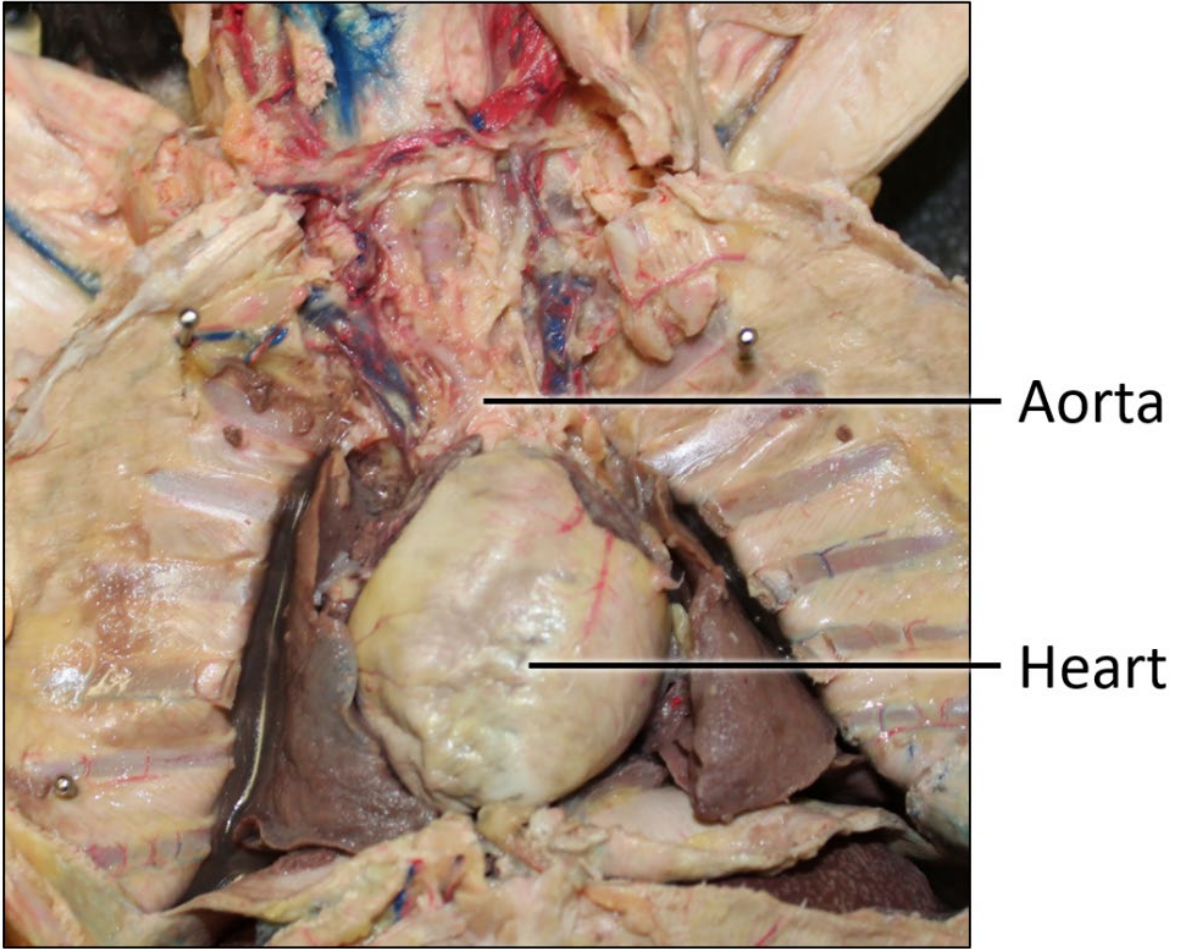


**Figure 3.** Cutting through the clavicle and sternum.

7. Carefully pull the ribcage apart on the right and left sides. Use dissection pins to pin the ribcage into place.
8. Use the scissors to carefully remove the pericardium and the thymus. Take extra care not to cut any major arteries or veins, or damage the lungs.
9. Use the scissors to carefully cut out the heart.
  - a) Start by cutting through the aorta. See Figure 4.
  - b) Then cut through the remaining attached veins on the dorsal side of the heart.

**Note: On occasion there may be a specimen that has latex dye that is not solid. If this occurs, be sure to rinse out any leaked dye from the body cavity.**





**Figure 4.** The aorta in relation to the heart.