

Patterns on Non-accidental Injury

Type of Injury	Examine for:	Diagnostic Process or Test
Head Trauma	Asymmetry from contusions or fractures Petechiae Ruptured tympanic membranes	Radiographs Inner ear exam
Abrasions or Bruising	Evidence of healing bruises or cuts (indicative of repetitive abuse) Embedded debris in skin or fur that can indicate dragging or throwing Fractured bones or ribs, including evidence of past injuries	Radiographs Note location, size and shape to connect to potential weapon
Feet Injuries	Frayed nails Torn pads Debris caught between pads and fur, or within frayed nail	Swipe feet across paper to preserve trace evidence; in deceased animals, remove nail DNA
Burns	Smell wound for accelerants, oils or chemicals	Swab the wound before and after treatment for analysis of chemical Photograph burn patterns
Starvation	Evidence of pica Gastric ulcers Occult fecal blood Melena	Bone marrow fat analysis Routine profile Examine stomach content and feces
Embedded Collar	Visible signs of trauma Foul odor from infection and necrosis	Take pictures before and after shaving Measure width and depth of wound Save the collar
Dog Fighting	Characteristic puncture wounds on face, neck and front legs Evidence of starvation and beatings Evidence of heavy chain used as collar	Test for use of steroids, analgesics, hormones or diuretics
Gunshot Wounds	Fur forced in or out at entrance and exit wounds Singed fur or coat Abrasion rings Gunshot residue on or inside the wound	Remove bullets with fingers or cotton-wrapped forceps Photograph each wound before and after cleaning Shave and note powder patterns
Ligature Injuries	Crushing injury to skin, blood vessels and tissue Surrounding tissue may be inflamed and infected	Characteristic bruising pattern Trace evidence
Knife Wounds	Length and type of blade Note tapers on one or both ends of wound	Measure external wounds Measure wound depth Swab for DNA, both human and animal

Source: Melinda Merck, DVM

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