



F43 Bite Mark Analysis in Mauling Death of Child: A Case Study

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The goal of this presentation is to outline how culpability was determined when two mixed breed pit bull terriers were involved in the tragic mauling death of a ten-year-old boy. The viewer will be shown the process used in this case study to arrive at the conclusions that determined the fate of the two animals and their caretaker.

On April 29, 2000, ten-year-old Cash Carson and his young neighbor friend were walking on a public dirt road in a residential area of Halloran Springs, CA, when two dogs ran out of an open gate and attacked the decedent. He was taken to the local emergency room where he remained conscious with good vital signs for approximately 20 minutes. He then became bradycardic and went into cardiac arrest. The Coroner was called by the hospital who in turn requested a forensic odontological evaluation to determine culpability of dogs and which dog inflicted the fatal wounds.

The bite marks on the decedent were photographically documented at the San Bernardino County Coroner's Office on May 3rd with 35mm color slide film and 35mm print film. The ABFO #2 scale was used in several photos in order to obtain size measurements of each injury. Observed clinically were multiple pattern injuries consistent. On May 5th an examination of the two dogs with canine bites, including abrasions, contusions, and laceratio ensued at the Animal Control Shelter in Devore, CA, where the dogs were being kept in custody. A veterinarian anesthetized the dogs individually so that polyvinyl siloxane impressions could be taken of the dental arches of both dogs. It was necessary to first mold custom trays for each dog in order to accomplish this task. The impressions were immediately poured up in die stone. Inter-canine widths were measured and photographed at this time on both dogs with an ABFO # 2 scale in place for reference and accuracy.

Six of the print photos of the injuries sustained to Cash Carson were then enlarged to life-size dimensions. These injuries were individually compared to the teeth of both dogs for consistency in tooth location and position. The photos depicted lacerations to the front and back of the neck of the boy, a punctate and abrasive injury to his fractured right arm, and a contusion in the middle of his back.

After analysis, it was concluded that the bites on the decedent's right arm, both dorsal and ventral portions, were consistent with the upper and lower teeth of the larger male dog. The fatal ventral and lateral neck injuries were also consistent with the lower teeth of the male. A very deep injury involving crushing of the seventh cervical vertebrae, spinal chord injury, and deep laceration to the back of the neck was found to be consistent in size and shape with the upper anterior teeth of the male. The abrasion that was made in the middle of the decedent's back was found to be consistent in size and shape with the lower anterior teeth of the smaller female dog.

Based on these conclusions, it was determined that both of the dogs were involved in the fatal attack and euthanasia was recommended. The smaller female was less culpable in terms of severity of the injuries; however, she had in fact participated in the attack. The larger male was found ultimately responsible for the fatal injuries to the decedent's neck.

The caretaker of the dogs (the owner was out of town when the attack occurred), was tried for first-degree murder in Superior Court at Barstow, CA. Witnesses stated that he had deliberately unchained the dogs when he observed the two youngsters approaching the residence. He was convicted of negligent homicide and received a seven-year sentence.

This poster presentation will demonstrate through printed text, photos and mounted dental models the sequence and technique of the various investigative methods used in determining culpability in the mauling death of ten-year-old Cash Carson.

Dog Bites, Pit Bull Terrier, Bite Mark Analysis