



Odontology Section – 2005

F28 Fatal Mauling of a Child by Three Dogs

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an increased understanding of analysis of bites inflicted by dogs in fatal attacks.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by reviewing the bite injuries on the victim and also review similar types of dog bite injuries.

The expression “Dogs are Man’s Best Friend” has implied that there is a constant congenial relationship between humans and canines but it is known from history this is not always the case. In fact, dog bites to human are common but are rarely fatal. In recent years there seems to be more media reports of fatal mauling of humans by various breeds of dogs. Usually the victims are children and the attacking dogs are commonly Pit Bulls or Rotweillers. Often times the victim is attacked by multiple dogs in a not so understood pack attack phenomenon and from time to time the forensic odontologist is consulted for an analysis of the bite injuries to determine the biter(s). This presentation will review the 2002 fatal mauling of a six-year-old boy by three dogs of mixed breed. The breeds of these dogs are not known normally to have a violent disposition nor were these dogs trained to be aggressive. There will be a brief review of two other Northern California attacks, the death of a young boy by two Rotweillers and the fatal attack of an adult female by two adult Presa Canario dogs in San Francisco.

In February of 2002, a six-year-old boy was playing on a jungle gym in an unfenced backyard when several dogs attacked him. Initially a neighbor who happened to look out the window observed several dogs chewing at an unknown object. He decided to investigate further and discovered the object to be the six-year-old boy. The boy was initially treated at St. Joseph Community Hospital in Red Bluff, California but because of the extensive nature of his trauma, he was transferred to U.C. Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, California where he later died. Initially, the local animal control agency was able to apprehend a half of dozen dogs in the neighborhood that they believe may be responsible for the attack. Their investigation eventually focused on three dogs that were owned by a police officer on retirement disability.

The Tehama County District Attorneys Office contacted the author to examine the photos of the bite mark patterned injuries on the victim. Also reviewed were the photos of the dogs and their respective dental stone models of their teeth. With the exception of one dog that was missing one canine tooth, the intermaxillary canine measurement was unremarkable and close to one another. Since the facial and scalp tissue was completely avulsed and because of the lack of any discernable bite patterns, inclusion or exclusion of any of the dogs as the biter(s) was not possible.

Because of other evidence not specifically known to the author, this matter was taken before a grand jury. The owner of the three dogs was guilty of a misdemeanor of owning vicious dogs.

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Dog Bite, Fatal Mauling, Child