



E59 Neanderthals, Werewolves, and a Pig Man: A Novel and Collaborative Method for Differentiating Human and Animal Skeletal Remains

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the unique aspects of the forensic evaluation of skeletonized remains, with emphasis on the differentiation of skeletonized human and animal remains. Attendees will also become familiar with a simplified method for differentiating such remains in the course of a multidisciplinary medicolegal death investigation.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a simplified, three-part, step-by-step method for distinguishing human and animal skeletonized remains, the principles of which medicolegal death investigators and medical examiners/coroners will be able to apply to skeletonized remains encountered during medicolegal investigations.

Many field investigations are conducted each year to examine and determine the origin of skeletal remains. A large majority of these investigations have been initiated by the discovery of what ultimately are revealed to be remains that are non-human in origin. In a large number of these cases, the bones are scattered and the most distinguishing feature for determining origin, the skull, is absent, fragmented, or obscured. These situations often present a problem for both law enforcement and medicolegal investigators because a reliable method for making such determinations is often not readily accessible. The availability of a forensic anthropologist for immediate response to the scene of the skeletal remains can be unrealistic, if not impossible. Also, the ability of law enforcement to secure a possible crime scene for an extended period of time may be equally problematic.

Medicolegal death investigations vary in type and scope. The goal of obtaining information useful in determining the cause and manner of death can at times be a simple process and at other times a laborious endeavor. These forensic investigations range from the examination of intact bodies to the inspection of fragmented, skeletal, or partial remains. Recognition of the anatomical origin of partial remains can be difficult. Distinguishing animal from human remains in the field can prove to be even more problematic for investigators. Confusion regarding the origins of these remains may result in an inordinate expenditure of investigative time and resources. A survey of the forensic literature reveals few basic field methods for distinguishing faunal from human remains. This presentation introduces a three-part, sequential, medicolegal method for evaluating and determining the origins of partial, decomposed, or traumatized remains in the field. These include scene evaluation, morphology, and osteology. These methods used as part of a multidisciplinary approach will yield more fruitful and effective forensic investigations.

Skeletal Remains, Osteology, Medicolegal Investigations