



H115 A Review of Multiple Dog-Mauling Fatalities of Infants Less Than Six Months of Age and Neonates in Travis County, Texas, and Cook County, Chicago, Illinois

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a greater understanding of the injuries found in neonates and infants mauled by dogs.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting unique findings regarding neonates mauled by dogs.

There are numerous dog bite fatalities in the United States every year. Most of these fatalities occur in children between 1 and 12 years of age. In contrast, deaths among neonates (less than four weeks of age) and infants less than six months old comprise a small percentage of pediatric deaths. In the 1-to-12-year-old age group, injuries typically involve the head and extremities. The injuries consist of multiple abrasions and lacerations. The lacerations involve the underlying blood vessels and result in death from hemorrhage; however, deaths in infants less than six months of age can also be the result of extensive crushing injuries.

This study reviewed seven dog-mauling fatalities of infants from Travis County, TX, and Cook County, IL. The ages ranged from six days to six months old.

Family members discovered two of the neonates suspended by their heads from the dogs' mouths. The injuries predominately involved the head and neck region and consisted of puncture wounds, lacerations, skull fractures, and brain hemorrhage. In one case, examination of the spinal cord demonstrated hemorrhages along the cord and nerve roots. The third neonate was found on the ground with extensive injuries to the torso, head, and neck. While similar injuries also occurred in the older infant age group, additional injuries to the torso with rib fractures and lacerations of the lungs and liver were identified in this age group as well. The neonates averaged 8 pounds in weight, 20 inches in length, and had an average head circumference of 32.5cm. The older infants averaged 12.4 pounds in weight, 24.5 inches in length, and had an average head circumference of 39.4cm.

Fatal injuries in neonates and infants are related to the physical characteristics of this age group: immobility, low weight, and short stature. Neonates can present with a unique subset of injuries to the neck region. Because they have relatively smaller head circumferences when compared to older infants, larger dog breeds can pick up and shake the neonate by the head, causing cervical spine injuries.

In conclusion, when a neonate is the victim of a dog mauling, the cervical spinal column should be removed and examined for injuries to evaluate shaking as a possible mechanism of death.

Dog Mauling, Neonates, Cervical Spine Injuries