

H90 Animal Tusk Injuries: Are They Unique With Specific Animals?

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The goals of this presentation are to discuss: (1) injuries caused by animals that use their tusks when attacking; (2) specific animal tusk patterns; and, (3) the importance of recognizing tusk injuries, their mechanism of causation, and their importance in forensic cases.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by introducing a better understanding of the manner and pattern of injuries caused by tusks of different animals, particularly wild boars.

Humans have historically always been subject to different types of trauma. There can be increased conflict with humans and animals due to shrinking animal habitat. Some of the animals have various patterns of injury causation. Some attack by using fangs, paws, horns, etc. Other animals have tusks, which they use primarily to search for food. Tusks have a variety of uses, depending on the animal. Social displays of dominance, particularly among males, are common, as is their use in defense against attackers. Elephants use their tusks as digging and boring tools. Walrus use their tusks to grip on ice and to haul out on ice. The presence of a tusk in only the male narwhal suggests that, for these whales, the tusk is a secondary sex characteristic. Though primarily a tool for obtaining food or as a sign of a secondary sexual characteristic, when the animal is in combat, these tusks can become a tool for attacking the encroacher and can cause fatalities.

Many of the injuries occurring to humans have been well reported in the literature; however, a medical doctor encounters different types of injuries that have little or no mention in the available literature. Identifying the injury is important as the method of causation of such injuries is very helpful for future identification as well as correlating the injury with the manner or object of causation. Additionally, the site at which such injuries occur on the human body can, to some extent, determine the possible animal and its method of causing the injuries.

This presentation highlights tusk injuries found in traumas caused by animal tusks. These injuries occurred due to striking, biting, or dragging of the body for some considerable distance. When such injuries occur to a victim and that person is brought to the hospital, it can necessarily be important for the doctor to identify the injuries. This will be useful not only for treatment but also for future medicolegal purposes.

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