

I34 The Phenomenon of Suicide-Peticide: Case Reports and a Review of the Literature

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will consider the phenomenon of suicide-peticide and the importance of a comprehensive forensic investigation.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by confirming that companion animals had significantly greater odds of being a medicolegal case in all categories.¹

The combined event of a suicide and the killing of a pet is an event relatively unexplored in forensic literature. Frequently, the killing method is the same for human and pet, but, according to Oxley, little is known about how the bond between humans and pets may infer suicidal and/or homicidal ideation.^{2,3} Forensic psychiatrists have tried to study this phenomenon considering the significance of the killing of a pet, as the animal is part of the family. In some individuals, the bond with pets prevents them from committing suicide.

In fact, concerns about who would care for their pets after they commit suicide could potentially influence the ideation of killing the pet before or together with suicide. Certainly, postmortem examination and forensic analysis could reveal key elements to better characterize similar events.

Recently, the phenomenon in the United States and the United Kingdom was investigated through media reports showing the variety of circumstances related to extended suicide. A number of similar cases have been experienced in Italy, but not all cases come to the attention of the forensic pathologist, so the phenomenon is underestimated.

Here is reported two case studies: one is a planned complex suicide-“peticide” of a woman and her dog perpetrated by the ingestion of psychoactive drugs in combination with self-strangulation of the woman and intentional drug fatal intoxication in the dog; the second is a “peticide”-homicide-suicide casework.

Data obtained from the death scene investigation, autopsy, and toxicological analyses will be reported.

Reference(s):

1. McEwen B.J. Trends in Domestic Animal Medico-Legal Pathology Cases Submitted to a Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory 1998–2010. *J Forensic Sci.* 57, no. 5 (September 2012): 1231-233.
2. Cooke B.K. Extended Suicide With a Pet. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law.* 41, no. 3 (2013): 437-43.
3. Oxley J.A., Montrose V.T., Feldman M.D. Pets and Human Suicide. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 249, no. 7 (October 2016): 740-41.

Suicide-Peticide, Autopsy, Death Scene Investigation