



H5 Autopsy Findings in Dog Attacks in Mississippi

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the affects the human body can suffer after experiencing a severe dog attack.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating a series of five different deaths in which the victims went through the extensive trauma of a dog attack and will provide an insight into multiple ways a dog attack can lead to a decisive cause of death.

The intent of this presentation is to better characterize the injuries victims may sustain in cases of severe dog attacks. A series of five cases in which victims sustained extensive traumatic dog attack injuries are described and help provide insight into the multiple ways a dog attack may factor into cause-of-death determination.

Case 1: A 70-year-old White female was found in her backyard by a neighbor after discussing with him that his dogs had gotten out of his fence. Autopsy examination revealed multiple cuts and claw marks noted on the anterior and posterior of her body, along with nearly a complete stripping of the skin from each arm. This case presented the challenge of determining whether the victim had died of natural causes in her backyard prior to the attack or whether she died as a direct result of trauma from the attack.

Case 2: A 75-year-old African American female was known to have had an agreement with many of her neighbors to collect cans. It is believed that she knocked on the door of a house whose owners often had cans for her, and when she found them not home, she wandered into their backyard. She was found in the yard with the owner's two dogs who had attacked her and dragged her body to the back of the yard against the fence. Autopsy examination revealed the majority of her facial tissue to be missing, including both ears. It was determined that the intense trauma to her neck was most likely the ultimate cause of death.

Case 3: A 3-year-old African American male was found at autopsy to have severe lacerations of his face and throat, as well as lacerations and gnawing injuries to both ears and jugular veins. Additionally, he had puncture wounds on the backs of his thighs as well as on the back of his head and neck. In this case, the attack was so powerful that he was found to have a dislocation of the C1/C2 vertebrae.

Case 4: A 45-year-old African American male was transported to the medical examiner's office with no known history other than that the victim was found lying deceased in the street. The decedent's body was covered in irregular lacerations and tears and had been castrated. There was evidence of multiple sharp force and blunt force injuries. Due to lack of further conclusive investigative findings, the death was ruled a homicide due to homicidal violence.

Case 5: A 50-year-old African American male stated before arriving at the hospital that a neighbor's dogs had attacked him and chased him down the street. At autopsy, there were numerous puncture wounds of the body, particularly on the left side and extremities. There was tearing and ripping of almost the entirety of the inner arms. Law enforcement investigation—in conjunction with the medical examiner's office findings—subsequently revealed that the victims in Cases 4 and 5 were killed by the same set of dogs. The dogs' owner was later charged with manslaughter with culpable negligence for both attacks.

Trauma, Dog, Laceration