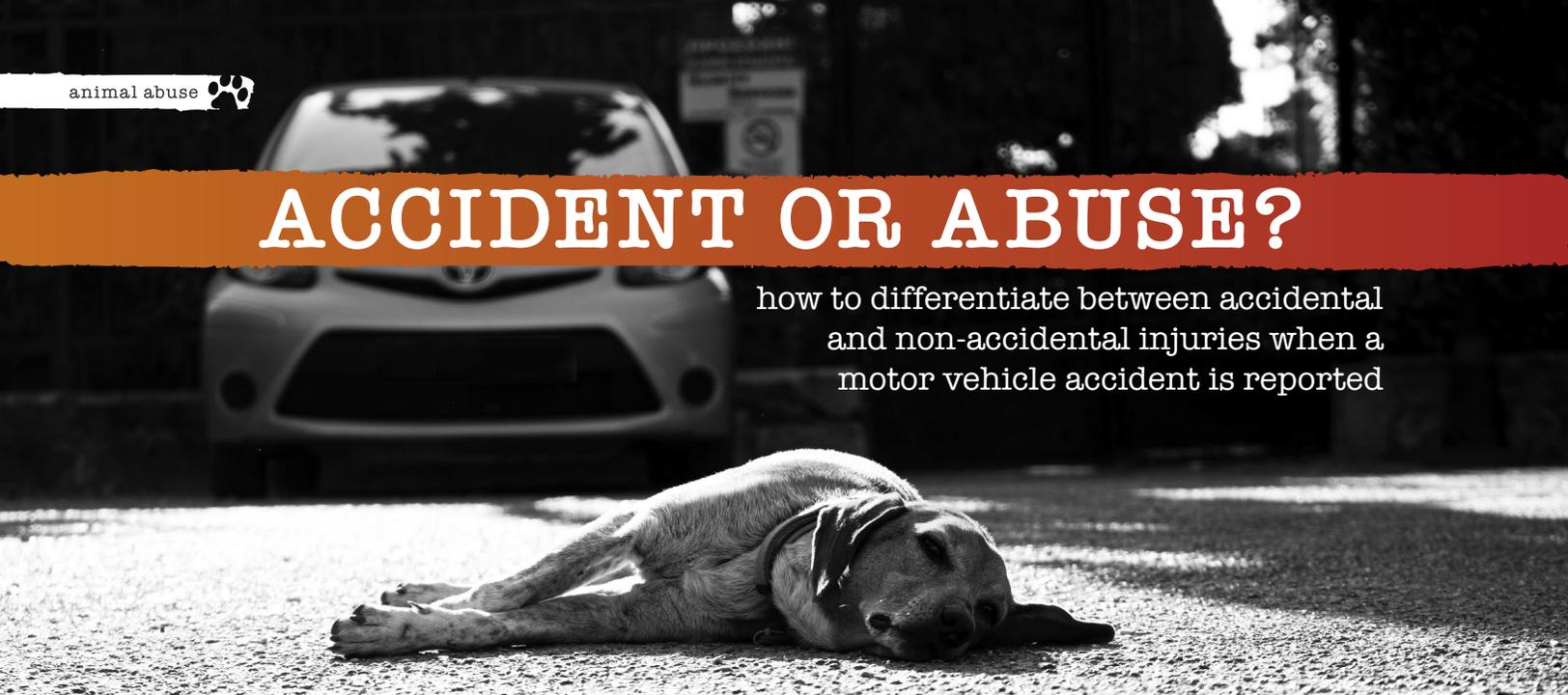


# ACCIDENT OR ABUSE?

how to differentiate between accidental and non-accidental injuries when a motor vehicle accident is reported



There are many types of injuries associated with blunt force trauma, and it can be difficult to distinguish between the various causes.

Both clients who do not know what happened to their injured pet *and* those who do know but don't want to divulge the cause may tell veterinary staff that the animal was hit by a car.

Non-accidental injuries (NAI) are the result of intentional harm inflicted on an animal and can look very similar to those sustained in a motor vehicle accident (MVA). Distinguishing accidental from non-

accidental injuries can be challenging and may not be possible based on physical signs alone.

Become familiar with the specific findings expected from common accidental injuries and pay careful attention to the history and narrative to see if they are consistent with the presentation. While none of the following are definitive proof, some injuries are more commonly associated with NAI or MVA than others.

Findings	Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA)	Non-Accidental Injury (NAI)
<b>Abrasions</b>	Usually present (road rash)	Usually absent
<b>Frayed nails</b>	Usually present	Usually absent
<b>Intrathoracic trauma</b>	Intrathoracic injury (pneumothorax, pulmonary contusions) more common than rib fractures due to large impact area.	Rib fractures common with NAI blunt force injury due to smaller impact area
<b>Fractures – Ribs</b>	Typically unilateral. When multiple are present, they are usually clustered. Cranial rib fractures are more common.	Can be unilateral, but bilateral is strongly suggestive of NAI. No cranial-caudal pattern. They can be both cranial and caudal
<b>Fractures – Other</b>	Pelvis, long bones.	Long bones, skull, teeth, vertebrae. Presence of older fractures is common.
<b>Location of fractures</b>	Usually cranial or caudal, not both.	Cranial or caudal (both is suggestive of NAI)
<b>Other Injuries</b>	Degloving wounds, dirt and debris in mouth/wounds.	Head injuries, scleral hemorrhage, damage to claws.
<b>Location</b>	Abrasions typically lateral on one side and medial on opposite due to contact with the ground.	May be located on recessed or protected areas of the body.
<b>Timing</b>	Injuries at same stage of healing.	Multiple injuries at various stages of healing.
<b>Depth</b>	Accidental blunt force injury is typically confined to one plane of the body.	Recessed or protected areas of the body.