

DOCUMENTING ANIMAL ABUSE

- 1 Identify the person(s) bringing in the animal.**
 - Determine their relationship to the animal.
 - Document where the animal primarily resides and with whom.
 - Record their contact information (first and last name, address, phone number, etc.).
 - Find out who else was recently around the animal and/or had access to it.
- 2 Describe the animal.**
 - Include sex, age, breed, color, microchip, etc.
 - Unless known, avoid noting the animal's exact age and breed.
 - Instead, provide an age range, use "appears to be," and/or add "type" to the breed.
 - e.g., Appears to be 2-3 years of age, pit bull-type dog.
- 3 Record the owner's account of what happened.**
 - Where possible, record the account in their words.
 - Note any/all of the following:
 - Changes to the story over time.
 - If the story differs between the people present.
 - If the account does not match the clinical findings.
 - Use name(s) of anyone with whom you communicate (e.g., "Mr. Jones" or "The owner, Frank Jones").
- 4 Describe unusual behaviors or interactions.**
 - These could occur between the people present and/or between the animal and the people present.
 - Look for signs of fear or deference.
- 5 Be thorough in the description of examination and diagnostic findings.**
 - Don't just focus only on the presenting complaint. Look for and record all abnormalities, as well as relevant findings that are within normal limits.
 - e.g., Bruising location, size, color, and whether venipuncture site clotted normally.
 - You may want to include a detailed assessment of your findings, possible differential diagnosis for the abnormalities, and how the exam findings may affect the comfort and well-being of the animal.
- 6 Photograph injuries as thoroughly as possible in the situation.**
 - Also record measurements and diagram the locations for your records.
 - *Note: Photography is frequently used in practice to document injuries for verification of appropriate response to treatment, so this can be part of your normal recordkeeping procedure.*
- 7 Look for and record evidence of chronicity and/or repeated injuries.**
 - For example, evidence of chronicity may include an embedded collar or emaciation.
 - Examples of repeated injuries include fractures that are healed or in various stages of healing.
- 8 Save physical evidence.**
 - This may include things like an embedded collar, bullets that were surgically removed, a stick and tape used to splint a fracture, or hair clipped from around a burn.
 - A paper bag works best for most items.
- 9 Record your medical recommendations, including any the owner declines.**
 - Obtaining a signature on your treatment plan is ideal.
 - Detail any education you provided to address issues that could worsen if not managed appropriately.
- 10 Document all follow-up.**
 - Including communication that occurs by phone, email, or office visit.
 - Make note of any appointments that were missed or cancelled.