

COMMON PRESENTATIONS



Some injuries and illnesses presenting to a veterinarian may raise suspicion of abuse, especially if they are inconsistent with the provided history. Veterinarians should report them when they have a reasonable suspicion, so that the proper authorities can investigate, rather than waiting until they feel they can prove a case. The investigation is greatly improved when veterinarians are aware of what to look for and what to document when abuse is suspected.

Common Presentations (See next page for chart)

- Abrasions or Bruising
- Asphyxiation by Ligature
- Burns
- Dogfighting
- Drowning
- Drugs/Poisons
- Embedded Collar
- Eye Injuries
- Feet Injuries
- Gunshot Wound
- Head Trauma
- Internal Injuries
- Knife Wounds
- Repetitive Injuries
- Starvation

REMEMBER: A reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect is enough to make a report. You may always call the appropriate humane agency for consultation, if you are unsure whether a report is warranted.



Presentation	Findings Suggestive of NAI	Documentation	Testing/Evidence Preservation
Abrasions or Bruising	<p>Most commonly seen over the thorax, abdomen, head/neck.</p> <p>Fur frequently hides bruising.</p>	<p>Photos of injuries. A diagram should be used to record size and distribution. If bruising is suspected or seen, shaving the area may improve visualization. Size and shape of injury may correlate with weapon.</p>	<p>Evaluate for fractures, internal injury and bleeding. Chemistry profile may indicate elevated CK from muscle damage.</p>
Asphyxiation by Ligature	<p>There may be crushing of the trachea, edema of the laryngeal region, lips, tongue, and eyelids.</p>	<p>Evidence of ligature injury around neck. May need to shave to see erythema or bruising.</p>	<p>X-ray exam of cervical vertebrae.</p>
Burns	<p>Cigarette burns, burns to the feet, caustic or chemical burns. Odor from the chemical or accelerant may be present.</p>	<p>Photos of injuries. Distribution, size, and severity of burns should be indicated on a diagram.</p>	<p>Collect singed fur for potential accelerant testing.</p>
Dogfighting	<p>Characteristic puncture wounds on face, neck, and front legs. Overlapping scars indicating repeated activity and evidence of heavy chain use.</p>	<p>Photos of injuries and scars. A diagram (scar chart) should be used to document wounds. Use one color for new wounds and a contrasting color for scars.</p>	<p>Testing for steroids, hormones, analgesics, diuretics, and babesia may be considered; preservation of any collars and/or chains.</p>
Drowning	<p>Animal may display few signs. May present wet. May show signs of struggle.</p>	<p>Photos. Signs of struggle or forcible restraint.</p>	
Drugs or Poisons	<p>Stupor or abnormal behaviors may be noted, as well as physical manifestations of toxin ingestion.</p>	<p>Note behavior and presenting condition.</p>	<p>CBC, chem, coag panel. Preserve stomach contents (if available), blood, and urine for potential subsequent testing.</p>
Embedded Collar	<p>Evidence of chronic injury around neck. Odor of infection/necrosis. Collar may or may not be present or visible.</p>	<p>Photos before and after removal and treatment. Document diameter of neck and collar. Note depth of wound at various sites.</p>	<p>Leave fastener intact when cutting off the collar, then preserve.</p>
Eye Injuries	<p>Conjunctival or scleral hemorrhage. Proptosis.</p>	<p>Photos of eye injury and any accompanying injuries</p>	<p>Coag panel to rule in/out coag disorder.</p>
Feet Injuries	<p>Frayed nails. Damaged/injured pads.</p>	<p>Document lesions. If pads ulcerated from filthy housing, odor of old excrement may be noted.</p>	<p>Photos.</p>
Gunshot Wound	<p>Fur forced into or out of an entrance or exit wound. Singed fur.</p>	<p>Location of wounds on a diagram. Evidence of powder.</p>	<p>Photos, X-rays, preserve singed fur and bullet fragments.</p>
Head Trauma	<p>Asymmetry from fractures or contusions. Change in mentation.</p>	<p>Note wounds on diagram. Neuro exam.</p>	<p>X-rays, photos, CBC, chem to rule in/out other causes.</p>
Internal Injuries	<p>Vague signs of illness or injury</p>	<p>May be difficult to recognize due to absence of external injuries.</p>	<p>X-rays, ultrasound, CBC, chem, coag panel.</p>
Knife Wounds	<p>Penetrating trauma.</p>	<p>Document length of external wounds and depth of internal.</p>	<p>Photos.</p>
Repetitive Injuries	<p>Injuries at various stages of healing.</p>	<p>Behavior of animal toward owner, may seem fearful. Document injuries on diagram</p>	<p>X-rays, photos.</p>
Starvation	<p>Emaciation, evidence of pica.</p>	<p>BCS (<i>be clear which scale is being used</i>). A muscle condition score (MCS) may be helpful as well.</p>	<p>Photos, CBC, chem, stomach contents, feces.</p>