

General Guidelines and Check List for Scene Investigation in Animal Mutilation Cases

When initially notified, the animal mutilation investigator should determine as much information as possible from the caller. The investigation itself should include:

A. Pre-plan investigation:

1. Owner's name, address, phone number.....
2. Individual animal identification (species, breed, age, sex, hair color, tag number, marks, weight, etc.)
3. Number of animals in the herd.....
4. Management practices, feeding, breeding.....
5. Herd health (morbidity and mortality in the several past years; losses experienced through animal deaths in similar conditions; vaccination practices and history)
6. Description of illness signs (if available) or health history of the dead animal.....
7. Date/time when the animal was last observed before death and condition at that time.....
8. Date/time when the death occurred (if known) or when the animal was discovered.....
9. Location and geographical characteristics of the property and the place where the animal was found (pasture, barn, etc.)
10. Distance from roads, highways, localities, neighboring farms, waters, wooden areas, etc.)
11. Previous similar occurrences on the premises and/or the proximity.....
12. Weather conditions at the time when the death presumably happened and during the time until the carcass was discovered.

B. At the scene of investigation:

1. Date/time of the investigation.....
2. Participants in the investigation; designation of investigation team and tasks.....
3. Assessment of the weather conditions (outside temperature, wind, precipitation)
4. Immediate environmental data: type of soil, vegetation; presence of preagonic struggle signs (pedaling signs on the soil, snow, mud, etc.); inspection for vehicle tracks
5. Visual inspection:
 - a. Nutritional condition.....
 - b. Body and body parts position; orientation with regard to compass cardinal points
 - c. Integrity of the body: missing body parts, description of the aspect of the remaining tissues, with regard to the aspect of the edges (tearing, chewing, sharp instrument cut, cautery, and other artificial means)
 - d. Hair coat condition (uniformity, presence of foreign materials, such as leaves, grass, leaves, soil, etc.)

- e. Presence of swellings, fractures (legs, horns, tail), parasites, wounds)
- 6. Other information regarding the event:
 - a. Odors emanating from the carcass and/or surrounding.....
 - b. Behavior of the other animals in the herd before and after the animal died; reaction to the presence of carcass.....
 - c. Behavior of wild animals in the surroundings (coyotes, foxes, wild dogs, etc.)
 - d. Presence and behavior of wild birds in the area.....
 - e. Usual incidence of predators and scavengers in the area.....
 - f. Unusual perceptions of the owner: lights, noises, smells noticed before, during or after the death of the animal; any strange perceptions, events, or impressions that could be related in a way to the death of the animal.....
 - g. Occurrence of similar cases in the neighborhood in the past.....
 - h. How such events are perceived by the local population; what are their beliefs.....
 - i. Similar cases reported and investigated by local authorities, veterinarians, and other bodies.
- 7. Photography, videotaping.....
- 8. Geiger counting
- 9. Microwave, electric and magnetic field measurements
- 10. Plant and soil sampling
- 11. Close inspection of the body, photography
- 12. Necropsy: external and internal examination of the carcass (see the necropsy protocol); possible cause of death.....
- 13. Photography of significant lesions.....
- 14. Sampling of different tissues for laboratory analyses (see the sample collection protocol)
- 15. Removal of the carcass (disposal, cremation, burying, refrigeration)

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