

This resource outlines features that may raise your index of suspicion for criminal neglect. No one item is indicative of abuse, but a closer look into a situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination.

Clinical Findings

- Underweight body condition (Purina BCS 1, 2, 3)
 - No underlying disease that explains underweight BCS
 - Eat and gain weight with limited or no medical intervention
- Hair coat matting
 - Extensive matting that requires a complete clip down
 - Strangulating hair mats of distal extremities
 - Skin disease secondary to severe hair matting
 - Traction alopecia - hair loss caused by chronic tension placed on hair in a particular area of skin
 - Fecal/urine staining, urine scald, pododermatitis, long claws
 - Pet and owner may have ammonia odor
- Embedded “collar” – anything that is tied around the dog’s neck (chain, nylon rope, real collar) to restrain the animal
- Illness related to environmental extremes (cold, heat)
- “Failure to Treat” serious medical condition(s)
- Associated evidence of Non-Accidental Injury – NAI (e.g. thoracic and other radiographs to identify bone fractures)

Animal Risk Factors

- Intact animals
- Small dogs with long hair coats
- Outdoor animals
- Outdoor dogs who are tethered
- Animals living in a hoarding environment
- Animals associated with organized fighting
- Commercial use of animals (i.e. breeding operations, farming)

History Risk Factors

- History inconsistent with findings or the account of the event does not explain the problems observed
- History varies as given by the same person to different people or as given by different people
- Lack of history
- Previous episodes of neglect with the same animal or other animal(s) in household
- Multiple visits with neglect problems
- Requesting medication for animals at home – can be seen with hoarding and/or breeding situations
- Requesting vaccines, but declining medical care
- New client/patient presenting for euthanasia

Caretaker Risk Factors

- New to practice or utilizing multiple clinics
- Discrepancies in names, addresses or ownership of the animal
- Reluctance to provide a full history
- Lack of knowledge or concern about current pets or previous pets
- Aggressive or argumentative upon questioning
- Behaving oddly
- Signs suggestive of possible domestic violence (DV), child abuse or elder abuse. Neglect cases are seen with domestic violence (DV)
- Delay in seeking medical attention

Reference

- Gerdin, J. A., et al. (2016). “Circumstances, Descriptive Characteristics, and Pathologic Findings in Dogs Suspected of Starving.” *Vet Pathol* 53(5): 1087-1094.
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- Pointer, E., et al. (2013). “Starvation and the clinicopathologic abnormalities associated with starved dogs: a review of 152 cases.” *J Am Anim Hosp Assoc* 49(2): 101-107