

# FEATURES THAT RAISE SUSPICION FOR CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE

## 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)
- Untreated serious medical condition(s) – “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 with significant lack of care with the same animal or other animal(s) in household
- 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 veterinary practices
- 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

**These are features that may raise your index of suspicion. 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.**

*Gerdin, J. A., et al. (2016). “Circumstances, Descriptive Characteristics, and Pathologic Findings in Dogs Suspected of Starving.” [Vet Pathol](#) 53(5): 1087-1094.*

*LaFlamme, D. (1997). “Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System for Cats.” [Feline Practice](#) 25(5-6): 13 - 18.*

*LaFlamme, D. (1997). “Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System for Dogs.” [Canine Practice](#) 22(4): 10-15.*

*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*