

FEATURES THAT MAY RAISE YOUR INDEX OF SUSPICION OF NON-ACCIDENTAL INJURY



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.

Injuries

- Repetitive injuries or injuries in various stages of healing
- Fractures
 - Of the skull, teeth, ribs (bilateral), vertebrae or femur
 - Multiple
 - In more than one region of the body
 - Transverse
 - Presenting at later stages of healing
 - At different stages of healing (multiple traumatic events)
- Bruising over the thorax, abdomen or head/neck
- Subconjunctival or scleral hemorrhages
- Pneumothorax, ruptured diaphragm, spleen or liver
- Damage to claws

Animal Risk Factors

- Dogs and cats under 2 years of age
- Male dogs
- Mix breed dogs
- Staffordshire bull terriers (purebred or mixed)
- Cats and small dogs (dogs <15 lbs)
- Animal displays fearful behaviors with caretaker

History Risk Factors

- History inconsistent with findings or the account of the events does not explain the injuries observed
- History varies
- Lack of history
- Previous injury/injuries
- Injury or death of multiple animals in household
- Multiple visits with presenting complaint being traumatic (frequently fractures)

Caretaker Risk Factors

- New to practice or utilizing multiple clinics
- Discrepancies in names, addresses or ownership of the animal
- Lack of knowledge or concern about previous pets' or current pets' injuries
- Becomes aggressive or argumentative upon questioning
- Behaving oddly
- Signs suggestive of possible domestic violence, child abuse or elder abuse
- Reluctance to provide a full history
- Delay in seeking medical attention

Adapted from:

Arkow P, Boyden P, Patterson-Kane E. Practical guidance for the effective response by veterinarians to suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect. Schaumburg, IL: American Veterinary Medical Association. 2011.

Intarapanich NP, McCobb EC, Reisman RW, Rozanski EA, Intarapanich PP. Characterization and comparison of injuries caused by accidental and non-accidental blunt force trauma in dogs and cats.

Journal of forensic sciences. 2016 Jul;61(4):993-9.

Munro HM, Munro R. Animal Abuse and Unlawful Killing: Forensic Veterinary Pathology. Edinburgh, UK: Elsevier Saunders; 2008.

Munro HM, Thrusfield MV. Battered pets': non-accidental physical injuries found in dogs and cats. Journal of Small Animal Practice. 2001 Jun;42(6):279-90.

Munro HM, Thrusfield MV. Battered pets ': features that raise suspicion of non-accidental injury. Journal of Small Animal Practice. 2001 May;42(5):218-26.

Tong LJ. Fracture characteristics to distinguish between accidental injury and non-accidental injury in dogs. The Veterinary Journal. 2014 Mar 1;199(3):392-8.