

# FEATURES THAT RAISE THE INDEX OF SUSPICION FOR ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE

While the definition of criminal animal sexual abuse varies by state, criminalized conduct often includes fondling, oral-genital contact, anal or vaginal penetration with an object or a body part, and genital mutilation. It is the examining veterinarian's responsibility to be knowledgeable of their state law. No one clinical finding is indicative of sexual abuse. It is a collection of historical and clinical facts that support the medical conclusion that sexual abuse has occurred.

## History Risk Factors

(as per verbal history and medical records)

- Type of injury (see clinical findings below)
- Witness statements
  - Admission by perpetrator
  - History inconsistent with findings or the account of events does not explain the injuries observed
  - History varies
  - Lack of history

## Diagnostic Imaging Findings

- Inserted foreign objects within the genital or rectal tract
- Gas pockets in the uterus or vagina
- Evidence of peritonitis
- Trauma to limbs, muzzle, or cervical region from inappropriate restraint/binding
- Skeletal injuries both acute and chronic (related and unrelated to sexual abuse)

## Clinical Findings on Physical Examination

- **No injuries:** Absence of injuries or bodily fluids does not exclude the possibility that sexual abuse has occurred.
- **Injuries caused by restraint of the animal:**
  - Bruising or abrasions of the skin on the tail base, back, flanks, ears, or neck
  - Ligatures or ligature marks around muzzle, genitalia or legs
- **Injuries caused by penetration of rectum and/or vulva:**
  - Bruising, abrasions, or tearing of genital, rectal, or anal tissue
  - Vaginal, colonic, or anal dilation/weak tone
  - Vaginal, colonic or rectal bleeding, prolapse, or perforation
  - Foreign objects in the rectum, vagina, cervix, or uterus
- **Other Findings**
  - Presence of bodily fluids on the hair coat/skin, or in the mouth, vagina, or rectum
  - Relaxed or highly reactive during invasive examination

## Caretaker Risk Factors

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

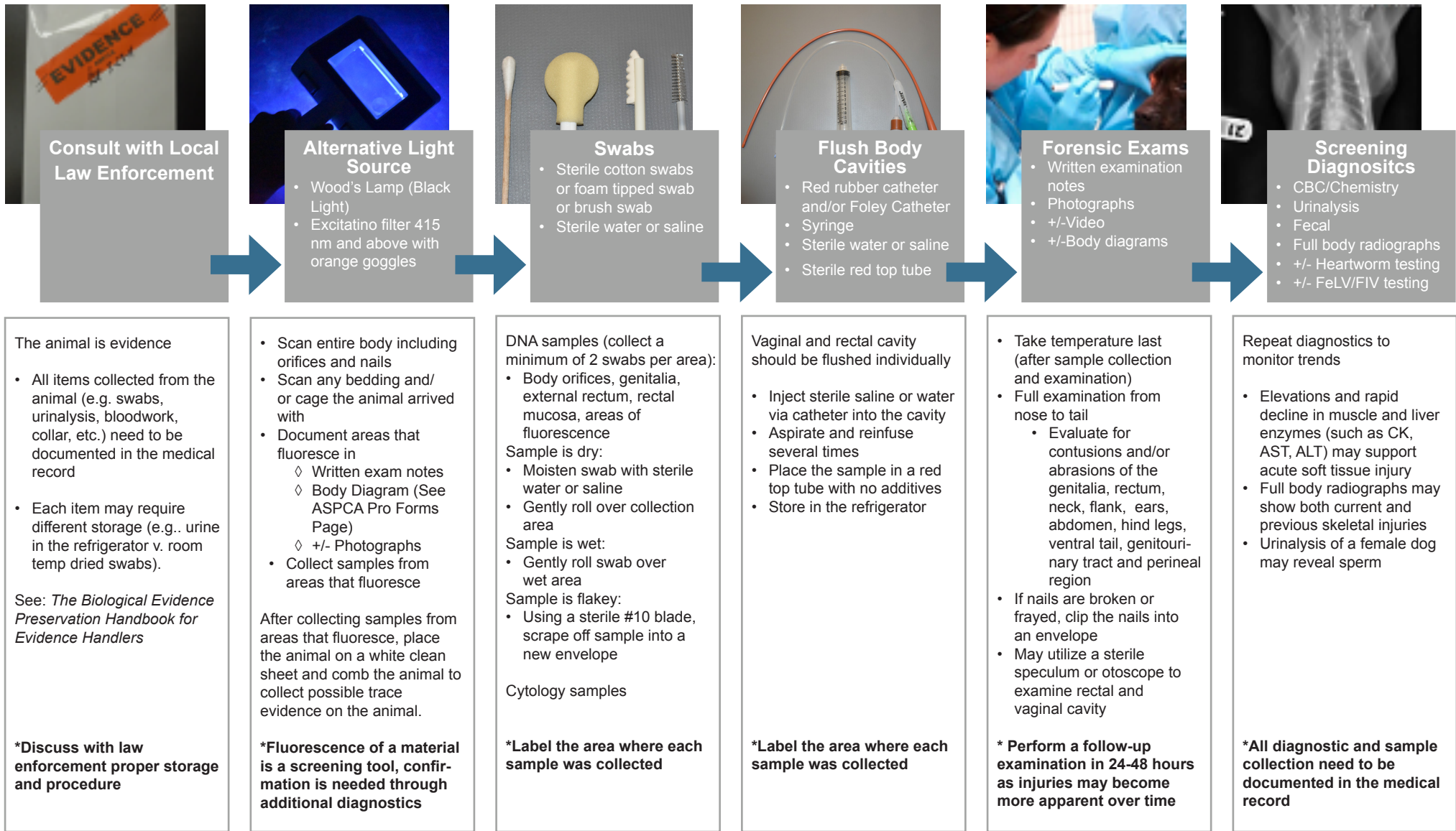
### References:

Bradley, N., & Rasile, K. (2014). "Addressing Animal Sexual Abuse." *Clinician's Brief*, [www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/addressing-animal-sexual-abuse](http://www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/addressing-animal-sexual-abuse).

Merck, M., & Miller, D. "Sexual Abuse." *Veterinary Forensics: Animal Cruelty Investigations*, 2nd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 233-240.

Munro, H. M., & Thrusfield, M. V. (2001). 'Battered pets': Sexual abuse. *Journal of Small Animal Practice*, 42(7), 333-337. doi:10.1111/j.1748-5827.2001.tb02468.

# GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PERFORMING A VETERINARY FORENSIC SEXUAL ABUSE EXAM



**PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION SHOULD BE OCCURRING SIMULTANEOUSLY**

These are suggestions, for clarification of any of the guidelines listed above, please further discuss with law enforcement.

Adapted from:

- Ballou, S. (2013). *The biological evidence preservation handbook: Best practices for evidence handlers*. Gaithersburg, MD, MD: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6028/NIST.IR.7928>
- Bradley, N., & Rasile, K. (2014). "Addressing Animal Sexual Abuse." *Clinician's Brief*, [www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/addressing-animal-sexual-abuse](http://www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/addressing-animal-sexual-abuse).
- Merck, M., & Miller, D. "Sexual Abuse." *Veterinary Forensics: Animal Cruelty Investigations*, 2nd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 233-240.
- Munro, H. M., & Thrusfield, M. V. (2001). "Battered pets": Sexual abuse. *Journal of Small Animal Practice*, 42(7), 333-337. doi:10.1111/j.1748-5827.2001.tb02468.
- Stem, A. W., & Smith-Blackmore, M. (2016). *Veterinary Forensic Pathology of Animal Sexual Abuse*. *Veterinary Pathology*, 53(5), 1057-1066. doi:10.1177/0300985816643574.