

FEATURES THAT RAISE THE INDEX OF SUSPICION OF ORGANIZED DOGFIGHTING

Veterinarians may encounter organized dogfighting in one of two ways:

1. Dog(s) presenting for medical care with medical history findings and injuries suspicious of organized dogfighting prompting a good faith report to law enforcement.
2. Request from an investigating agency to participate in a scene investigation and/or to render an opinion regarding injuries and/or pattern of injuries present on a dog(s) suspected to be involved in organized dogfighting.

Dogs associated with organized dogfighting may fall into one of three categories:

1. Breeding
 2. Training
 3. Fighting
- A fighting operation may include only one or any combination of these categories
 - The medical findings (i.e., sex, age, injuries) will vary based on the type of operation

Scene Investigation

- **Housing**
 - Dogs housed separately from each other
 - Urban
 - » Dogs “warehoused” separately in individual enclosures
 - Rural
 - » Dogs kept in wooded or secluded area, tethered on heavy chains just outside of reach of one another, often with a 50-gallon drum as the only shelter.
 - Puppies may be housed together
- **Paraphernalia** associated with organized dog fighting
 - Pharmaceuticals and nutritional supplements
 - Medical equipment- Suture material, surgical staplers, glue, IV kits, bags of IV fluids, etc.
 - Training and Fighting – Treadmills, break sticks, spring poles, fighting pit (may be disassembled), etc.

Signalment

- American Pit bull Terriers are the predominant breed of fighting dog in the U.S.
- Smaller, leaner dogs (approximately 30-50 pounds)
- Intact males and females
- Dogs typically begin training around 1 year of age and are not entered into a contract fight until 2 or more years of age

History

History provided for dermal injuries (dog bite wounds and scars) may be that the injuries are due to a spontaneous dog fight or other injury (i.e., tangled in barbed wire or went through a window). This is inconsistent with medical findings which suggest that injuries were caused by organized dogfighting.

Physical Exam Findings

- Thin to lean body condition (BCS 3-4/9) and well-muscled (especially if in training or recently fought)
- Presence of dermal injuries
 - Multiple bite injuries which may be a mix of recent wounds and scars depending on when the dog last fought.
 - Concentrated in the front of the body (primarily located on the front legs, dorsal and lateral aspects of the head and muzzle, and oral mucosa). This is different than injuries from a spontaneous dog fight, where the wounds are few in number and primarily located on the ears, followed by the neck and front legs.
- Absence of dermal injuries does not exclude an association with dogfighting. A dog with no or minimal injuries may include:
 - Those that have not been fought
 - Dogs less than 2 years of age
 - Dogs in a breeding operation
 - Dogs that won their fight in minimal time
- Missing, loose, worn, or fractured teeth in dogs that have fought and are often associated with significant dermal injuries.
- Worn claws and/or abraded paw pads (if in training or recently fought- otherwise likely to be overgrown due to confinement)
- Alopecia and/or erythema of the ventral aspect of the neck due to heavy collars
- Ears may be cropped short (not as common as it once was)
- High level of dog-to-dog aggression. Absence of aggression toward people.
- Evidence of medical intervention(s) by untrained individuals (e.g., cropping, docking, wound management and closure)

Diagnostic findings

- Positive for *Babesia gibsoni* and/or *Babesia vulpes* in a single dog, or a high incidence of infection in a group of dogs
- Increased CK and/or ALT and/or AST (recently fought)
- Anemia (recently fought or active *B. gibsoni* infection)
- Bone pathology associated with overlying bite wounds or scarring. Fractures, punctures, scoring, or periosteal changes (skull and front extremities) .
- Anabolic steroids (dogs in training or recently fought). Test if suspected to have been recently fought or being prepared to fight

These are features that may raise your index of suspicion. No one item is indicative of involvement in organized dogfighting, but a closer look into a situation maybe warranted when these findings appear repeatedly or in combination.

References

- Niestat, L., M Gupta, R Touroo,. E Brandler. Comparison of *Babesia gibsoni* infection in pit bull-type dogs with and without a known history of involvement in organized dogfighting. FSIAE Forensic Science International: Animals and Environments 2022.
- Touroo R, Reisman R. Animal Fighting. Veterinary Forensic Pathology, Volume 2: Springer, 2018;97-119.

CANINE DERMAL PATHOLOGY

Animal ID #: _____

Date: _____

Examining Veterinarian: _____

Signature: _____

Law Enforcement Agency: _____

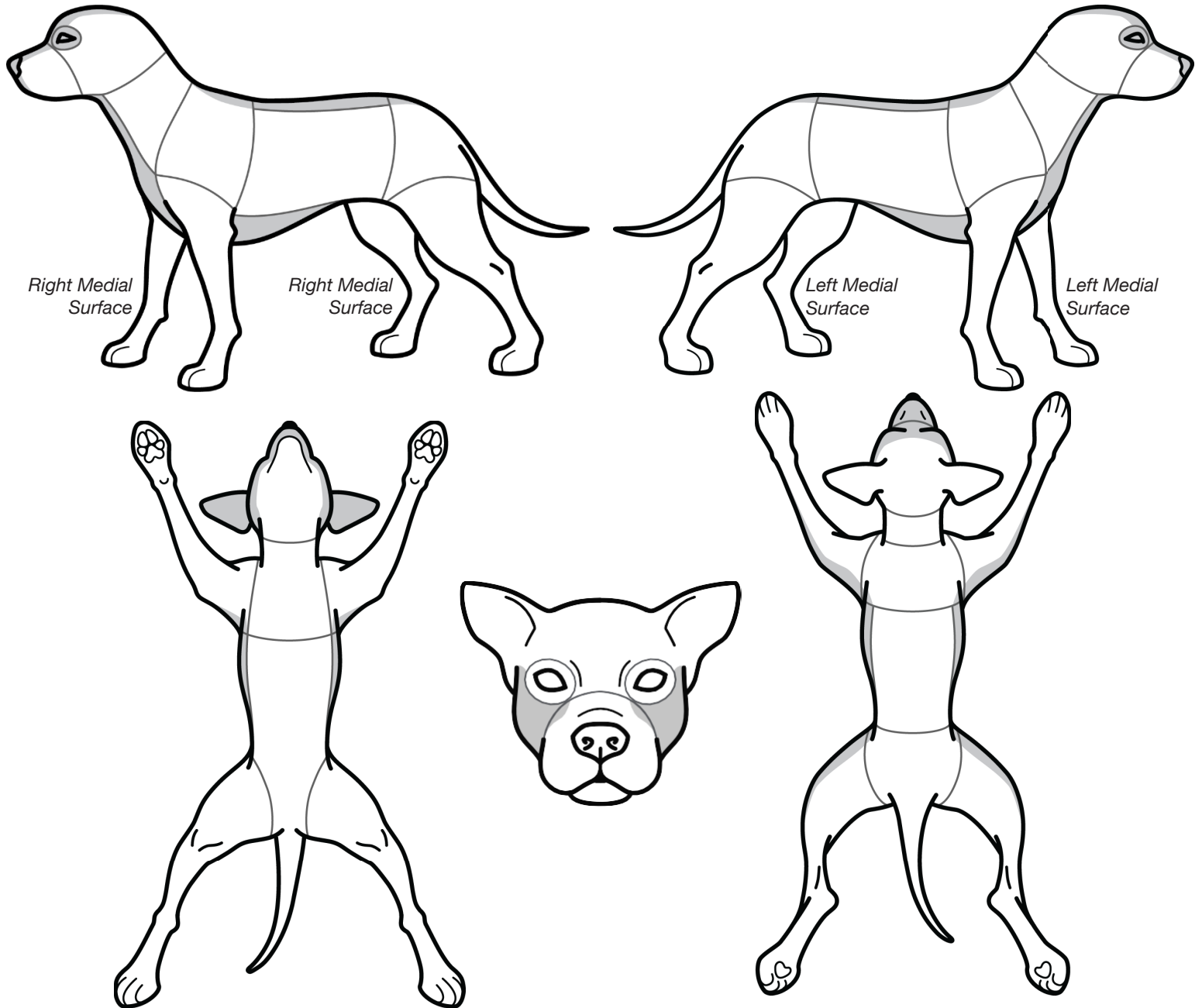
Case#: _____

Note: For a dermal injury, make one mark in the appropriate zone. Do not make any marks in grey areas

Scars or Wounds: Yes / No

Scars: Blue Marks

Wounds: Red Marks



References

- Intarapanich, Nida P, Rachel M Touroo, Elizabeth A Rozanski, Robert W Reisman, Pichai P Intarapanich, and Emily C McCobb. 2017. 'Characterization and comparison of injuries caused by spontaneous versus organized dogfighting', Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 251: 1424-31.
- Miller, Katherine, Rachel Touroo, C. Spain, Kelly Jones, Pamela Reid, and Randall Lockwood. 2016. 'Relationship Between Scarring and Dog Aggression in Pit Bull-Type Dogs Involved in Organized Dogfighting', Animals, 6: 72.