

# FORENSIC PHOTOGRAPHY: ON-SCENE LIVE ANIMAL DOCUMENTATION

At a crime scene, animals are considered items of evidence and must be documented as such. This documentation should include the animal(s) itself as well as their environment(s). Forensic photographs must be a clear and accurate representation of the evidence, thereby allowing independent review of the evidence by all parties involved.

## Reasons to Utilize Forensic Photography

- In situ photographs of the animal(s) document the location where they were found.
- Photographs can be used to identify individual animals and help eliminate potential confusion between animals with similar appearances.
- Photographs visually record the condition of the animal(s) and their living environment(s) at the time of discovery and can then be used to explain and support written documentation and testimony.

## Tips and Considerations

- The animal's ID number can be written on a piece of duct tape or other type of label and placed on or near the animal or its environment.
- Any writing surface can be used as a photo identification board. Dry erase boards or laminated forms are recommended.
- A photo identification board should include the following information:
  - Case number
  - Animal ID or name
  - Date
  - Location
  - Name of photographer
- Avoid inclusion of the human handler and/or excessive background.
  - Identifying features of the handler should be avoided (e.g., turn face to the side and cover visible tattoos).
  - Neutral backgrounds are preferred if possible; shiny backgrounds should be avoided.
- No part of the identification photo board, animal, or living area should be cut from the photo frame.
- Utilize videography to demonstrate information not recorded by still photos (e.g., behaviors, degree of lameness, vocalizations).
  - Mute all videos or ask people to remain silent while recording.

## Minimum Forensic Exam Photo Series

*See reference photos on the back of this handout*

1. Photo identification board with the case information
2. Close-up of ID label on the animal enclosure or within the living area
3. In situ: Overall of animal(s) in their enclosure/ living area
4. Animal with the photo identification board

- ☐ Close-up of animal's face with photo identification board held adjacent

### 5. Left side of the animal's body (full body)

### 6. After animal is removed, obtain the following photographs:

- ☐ Overall photographs of the enclosure/living area
- ☐ Contents of any water and/or food receptacles
- ☐ Inside any/all shelters/enclosures
- ☐ Evidence of illness (e.g., vomiting, parasites, diarrhea, or blood) or presence of non-food items in feces
- ☐ Features of the enclosure that may cause injury (e.g., nails or sharp edges)
- ☐ Any other areas of interest or concern

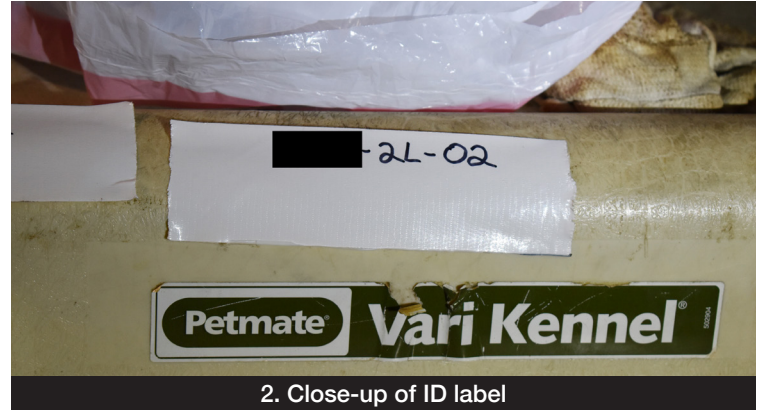
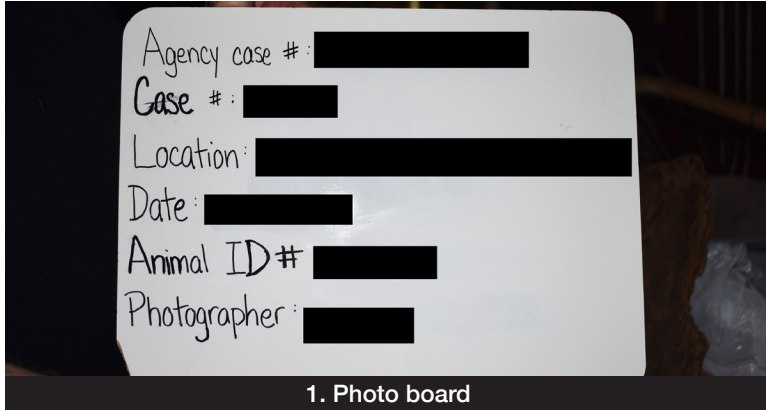
## Reference

- Touroo R, Baucom K, Kessler M, Smith-Blackmore M. Minimum standards and best practices for the clinical veterinary forensic examination of the suspected abused animal. Forensic Science International: Reports. 2020 Dec 1;2:100150.



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## Minimum Photo Series: Animal Removal



## Minimum Photo Series: After Animal Removal



Entire enclosure with no manipulation: include walls, ceiling, flooring, bedding, food and water receptacles, and other items in enclosure.