

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.

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.

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

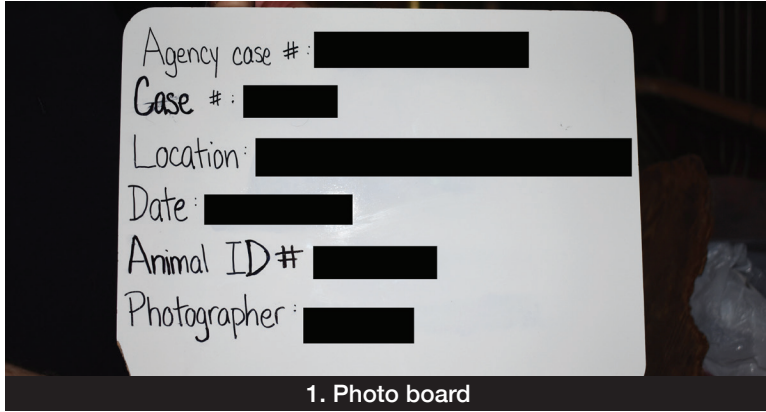
- Close-up of animal's face with photo identification board held adjacent

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

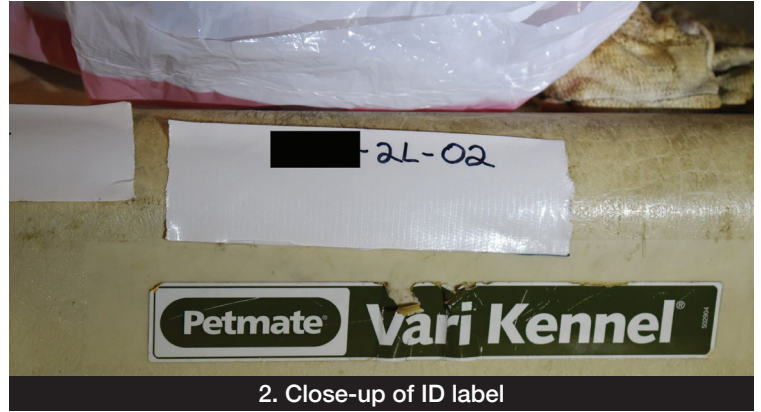
6. After animal is removed, obtain the following photographs:

- 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

Minimum Photo Series: Animal Removal



1. Photo board



2. Close-up of ID label



3. In situ



4. Animal and photo board



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

Minimum Photo Series: After Animal Removal



6a. Enclosure/living area



6b. Water and/or food receptacles



6c. Inside any/all shelters/enclosures

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