Animal Cruelty Investigations:
Crime Scene Response
Processing and Documentation

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TYPES OF ANIMAL CRUELTY CRIMES

Physical Abuse

Neglect
Animal Cruelty Is A Crime

How Is it similar to other Crimes?

- Suspect(s)
- Victim(s)
- Unable to speak for themselves
- Is a piece of evidence in the criminal case
- Handled as evidence until disposition of case

How Is it different?

- Purpose: Locate, Document, Collect and Preserve the Physical Evidence.
Steps of Crime Scene Processing

- Assessment
- Observation
- Documentation
- Search
- Collection
- Analysis

(Gardner, 2005)

Why doesn’t this work for animal crime scenes?

LIVE VICTIMS!!!!

- Running loose
- Potentially dangerous
- Critically ill and injured
- Untrained personnel
- Inexperienced LE

Scope of the Scene

- Small Scale
  - Often, single event occurs and law enforcement contacted
  - Minimal number of victims
  - Small area (residence, yard, etc.)
  - Minimal number of responders necessary
  - Scene can be processed by 1 or 2 people
Scope of the Scene

- **Large Scale**
  - Multiple victims – living and/or deceased
  - May cover large area with multiple structures (standard yard to several acres)
  - Scene processing requires multiple people and more equipment
  - It is what is more than your agency can handle alone.
Large Scale

Large Scale Scenes

Lots of people + Lots of animals + Large area =
What we have learned...

• Adapt the steps – don’t disregard!

• Use multiple teams and stagger into waves

• Multiple activities happening at the same time

Crime Scene Management
Crime Scene Process

1st Wave
Overall Entry Photographs & Video
Walkthrough Team (On Release)

2nd Wave
Evidence Identification & Documentation
Animal Triage
Location & Animal ID Labeling
Sketching

3rd Wave
Evidence Collection & Packaging
In Situ Animal Photos
Animal Intake & Removal
Forensic Processing

4th Wave
Post Removal Documentation
Forensic Processing

5th Wave
Secondary Evidence Search
Overall Exit Photographs and Video

1st Wave – Assessment/Observation/Documentation

• Overall Entry Photo & Video
  • Document the scene prior to altering

• Walk-Through Team Identifies:
  • Scene layout and animal removal flow
  • Safety hazards
  • Triage Vet can identify emergencies and exam priorities
EMERGENCY TRIAGE

- Critical animals identified by veterinarians
- If immediate treatment is required, animals are photographed and documented in place by AIR team member before being removed
- Evidence Receipt or Transport manifest for COC

2nd wave - Observation, Documentation and Search

Four methods
1. Photography
   - Overall
   - Midrange
   - Close-up
2. Video
   - Real time
   - Sounds and behaviors
3. Sketch
   - Places evidence in the scene
   - Shows relationship
   - Layout
4. Notes
2nd wave (continued)

- Evidence search and identification
  - Items of evidence identified and numbered
  - Evidence inventory started
  - In situ / mid-range photographs (or wait for collection)
  - Areas of interest identified (blood, burials, etc.)
  - Deceased animals

- Live Animals:
  - Also evidence and should receive a unique identifying number just like other physical evidence
  - Animal ID numbers should not repeat physical evidence item numbers
  - Keep as simple as possible for tracking purposes

- Environment documentation
  - Temperatures, ammonia levels, odors and other important situational evidence

2nd wave (continued)

- Sketching
  Team of 2 or more people
  Multiple teams may be necessary depending on property
  Sketch all aspects of scene
    - Overall property plan view
    - Profile of stacked cages
    - Evidence location
    - Animal locations and ID numbers
    - Others as needed
SKETCH

- Preserve the location of evidence on the scene
- Provides an overall view of the scene
- Particularly useful with multiple animals housed in different areas

Evidence Photographs
ANIMAL ID NUMBERS:

AL – C – 6

SCENE LETTER

SECTION LETTER

UNIQUE ID #
3rd wave – Collection

- Evidence collection and packaging
- Animal location photographs (in situ)
  - Animal ID label
  - Each animal within their location
  - *Whenever possible*, photograph general conditions of the location before they are altered
    - Food/water bowls
    - Litter boxes
    - Environment – blankets, newspaper, etc.

Collection and Packaging

Proper techniques:
- Protects
  - Personnel from hazards
  - Evidence from contamination, cross transfer
- Identifies evidence:
  - Evidence origin
  - COC
- Preserves integrity of evidence for court
3rd wave – Collection Continued

• Animal intake and removal
  • Once an animal is removed from its original location, an intake photograph should be taken prior to transport.
  • A photo board should be used that illustrates:
    • Case number
    • Scene location
    • Date
    • Animal ID number
  • A mug shot style photo should be taken with the photo board with front and lateral views.
  • Additional photos should be taken to show any distinguishing marks or injuries.

Animal Intake and Removal

![Animal Intake and Removal Images]
4th wave – Animal Removal and Forensic Processing

Animal Removal
• After intake processes, animal removed to transport carrier and turned over to load master
• Transport manifest created to continue tracking

Forensic Processing
• Phenolphthalein and OBTI testing
• Biological and trace collection
• Alternate Light Source (ALS/FLS)
• Excavation

Animal Post-Removal Photographs
Additional Documentation

Food and Water

• Amount – is there sufficient amount for the number of animals?
• Type – is the food present the right type for the animals present?
• Quality – is it fresh and potable, and properly nutritious?
• Accessibility – can all of the animals easily access or is it out of reach?

General conditions

• Feces and urine
  • Excessive amount – proper number of litter boxes, old waste present on floor, etc.
  • Diseased feces or vomit
  • Evidence of eating things other than food
Additional Documentation

Living Area:
• Clean-Cleanable?
• Safe?
• Appropriate size?
• Other hazards?

Additional Documentation

• General conditions
  • Temperatures inside and outside of enclosures
    • Should be recorded multiple times to show extremes of hot/cold
  • Ammonia levels
    • Digital or color change readings can be taken
    • Exhibit can be collected
5th wave – Final Search and Documentation

- Secondary evidence search
- Exit Overalls-Photo & Video
- COC complete
- Clear scene

Is this process always necessary?
How many people does this take?
Forms

- May be used to document some of the information
- Forms can be printed in duplicate or triplicate for additional copies

- Crime Scene Worksheet
- On-Scene Responder Log
- Evidence Inventory
- Evidence Receipt
- Animal Inventory
- Transport Manifest
On-Scene Responder Log

• Documentation of ASPCA responders, their assignments and times entered and left the scene
• Equivalent to a Crime Scene Log

Evidence Inventory

• Shows when and from where evidence was collected
• Column to record image numbers
• Disposition of evidence – submitted for analysis, turned over to LE, etc.
Evidence Receipt

- Shows the chain of custody - continuous and recorded link established when evidence is transferred from one person to another.
- Chronological documentation of seizure, custody, control, transfer, analysis and disposition
- Shows that the evidence submitted in court is the same evidence collected on scene

Animal Inventory

- Consecutive list of animals removed - animal ID, including location code, and description of the animal
- Evidence Receipt for the live animals removed form the property
Animal Transport Manifest

- Lists individual animals on each transport run and provides information on origin and destination of the animals
- Provides chain of custody signature lines for the transport driver and recipient of the animals

Summary

- Procedural order for processing animal crime scenes is determined by the scale of the scene
- Important variables are:
  - Number of animals
  - Physical size of the scene
- Crime scene processes can be adapted but not discarded
WE ARE THEIR VOICE.™

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