Addressing Animal Sexual Abuse*

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Suspected or actual sexual assault

Veterinarian able/willing to perform the medical–forensic examination?

No

Yes

Place animal in clean kennel with removable bedding and Elizabethan collar; post NPO placard on cage

<120 hours since injury

For owned animal, obtain client consent for medical–forensic examination

• If the owner does not consent, the police may get a search warrant

• If the examination is being authorized, document under whose authority

>120 hours since injury

For stray animal, obtain law enforcement seizure paperwork

Check entire body with black light or alternative light source

Swab (wet) any fluorescent areas

Perform head-to-tail examination:

• Swab genitals and oral cavity (do not take rectal temperature before obtaining swabs)

• Measure and document all injuries

• Collect blood and urine, and take radiographs

• Document findings

Report to law enforcement

Release animal to law enforcement or humane society

Notify law enforcement and forensic professionals; suggest evidence collection

• Alert law enforcement if perpetrator is known or suspected

* This algorithm is part of the inaugural installment of a series of case studies on forensic veterinary medicine. See the companion article Recognition & Management of Animal Sexual Abuse on page 73. Additional articles on forensic medicine will be featured in future issues.