

## DOG BITES

## Forensic veterinary science of bite wounds

C. J. MANNION and colleagues raise some valid issues in their letter about preventing dog bite wounds in people (*VR*, June 4, 2011, vol 168, p 594).

The issue of bite marks on or from animals is a developing and specialised field of forensic veterinary science. Bite mark analysts are often called to give professional and expert testimony in court on bite marks from an animal that may bite another animal, an animal that bites a person and humans that bite animals.

Animal-on-animal bites tend to receive a lot of attention where a dog may have been taken into possession during an investigation of a crime involving badgers, and the bite marks viewed and examined on the dogs may need to be identified as those that are more likely to be from a badger than from any other animal, or in some cases caused by barbed wire, undergrowth, and so on.

People who are bitten by animals are often left injured by the event, and efforts to treat the injured person may not always have a forensic focus, thus leaving a large amount of valuable evidence that can be retrieved at the time to go uncollected. Non-pigmented human skin can be exposed via forensic imaging techniques to certain light wavelengths that can allow visualisation of a bite mark pattern long after visual wound healing has occurred ([www.companys7.com/library/nikon/Reflected\\_UV\\_Imaging\\_for\\_Forensics\\_V2.pdf](http://www.companys7.com/library/nikon/Reflected_UV_Imaging_for_Forensics_V2.pdf)). This can allow, at least in some instances, a stronger case to be presented in a report or courtroom if a claim is subsequently made against a responsible

party. When dogs are presented with a bite received from a human it may not always be identified correctly as a bite or a human bite, and the correct examination, analysis and interpretation of these events requires considerable skill.

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