

Examination of living and dead animals in criminal cases

EXAMINATION OF LIVING AND DEAD ANIMALS IN CRIMINAL CASES

- The object of the examination is to ascertain the cause and the manner of death in all deaths from criminal violence, or in sudden deaths from unknown causes.
- Without proper examination it is not possible to ascertain cause of death in all cases of criminal violence, and sudden deaths due to unknown causes, even when apparently the animal appears to have died from natural causes.
- It is not uncommon to find that cases of apparently natural deaths or of death due to contagious disease have actually died of poisoning or violence, which caused rupture of internal organs without any external lesions. If it is the question of an injury, or death following an injury, it is necessary not only to describe in detail the injury, but also to indicate the approximate time of its occurrence, nature of the weapon used, and manner of causing injury.
- Every possible cause should be investigated before venturing an opinion as to the cause of death. Not only should the post- mortem lesions, both external and internal, be carefully examined, but all circumstantial evidence given and the surroundings, such as the field, or the land, etc., where the animal was found dead should be described.
- The history, as given by the owner, should be noted briefly and signed by the owner, or left thumb impression (right thumb impression, if a woman) taken if he or she is illiterate.
- In our climatic conditions, it is necessary to perform the post-mortem as early as possible to avoid decomposition of the carcass and its mutilation by carrion animals such as dogs, vultures, hyaenas, etc., because safeguarding these carcasses under village conditions is not always easy.
- Needless to say that the post -mortem report should be carefully drafted in a logical order without any exaggeration, so that a true picture of the case can be stated on oath in the witness-box.
- The proforma for recording a post-mortem report must be filled in triplicate at the time of the post- mortem examination, signed, timed and dated. It would be useful to maintain a vetero-legal register at various institutions to provide guidance to newcomers.
- Where only bones are available, it is necessary to record the detailed description of the important bones, which would provide sufficient information to identify the species, the sex and age if possible of the animal.
- This is specially important in the case of cattle and buffaloes on account of ban on slaughter of cows of all ages and of bullocks below 15 years of age. Any malformation should be specially noted. The odour and feel of bones should be noted carefully for assessing the time of death, as recent bones have a peculiar odour and a greasy feel.

Examination of blood-stains

EXAMINATION OF BLOOD-STAINS

- Examination of blood-stains is of great importance for vetero-legal purposes. The blood-stains are examined to ascertain whether or not they consist blood; if so, to what species of animal the blood belongs, whether mammal, bird, fish or reptile.
- The examination of all kinds of stains is done by the Chemical Examiner. Before removing stains for analysis, a note should be made indicating exactly where they were found and their relative position.
- Stains from persons and animals are best removed with a piece of filter paper soaked in normal saline solution.
- The paper is left in contact until it is coloured, then removed and dried. In case of garments and weapons, the articles should be allowed to dry, then carefully and separately wrapped and packed without unnecessary handling.
- Liquid stains are taken in dry tests tubes with the help of dropper or pipette and the test tube is sealed. The test tube is placed on a cracked- ice container. Moist stains are completely dried and handled as dry stains.
- Removable stained objects must be sent to the laboratory. Blood-soaked soil is taken up completely and is sent in a glass container. If stains lie on non-removable objects, such as wall and floors, are representative section which contains the stain, is removed by digging out and sent in a container.
- In exceptional cases stains can be scrapped up by a knife. The examination of blood-stains may be carried out by the following methods:
 - Physical examination
 - Chemical examination
 - Microscopic examination
 - Spectroscopic examination
 - Serological examination