

Outdoor post-mortem depredation by local fauna

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SUMMARY

We present the case of complete post-mortem decapitation of a 43 years old man killed by gunshots discharged from a distance of 40 – 50 cm. The corpse was left in the courtyard of his isolated carpentry and a mongrel dog lived in that courtyard, maybe attracted by the blood gushed from the wound, got a depredation of the corpse till the complete decapitation and the removal of all intrathoracic organs. The action of the dog was completed by the rats and mice that lived in the place. The case is not rare and sometimes the alteration of the features of the corpse makes it impossible for the investigators, to objectively find any other signs of criminal nature.

Keywords: post-mortem injuries – decapitation – animal depredation

Postmortální devastace těla místní faunou venku, mimo uzavřené prostory

SOUHRN

Soudní lékař se ve své praxi často setkává s případy, při kterých dochází k porušení stavu a celistvosti těla vlivem místní fauny. K tomu může dojít jak v případě, že se tělo nachází v otevřené krajině, tak v případě, kdy je tělo uvnitř, např. v bytě. V našich zeměpisných šířkách (Itálie) se v otevřené krajině uplatňuje častěji vliv malých hlodavců (myši a krysy), psů, koček a někdy i lišek. Obvykle jiná situace nastává tehdy, když je tělo v uzavřeném bytě. I když ani tehdy nemůže být vyloučena možnost občasného přístupu zvířete z vnějšku, pozornost je třeba zaměřit spíše na zvíře, které v tomto bytě žije. V této práci je prezentován případ úplné posmrtné dekapitace muže zabitého ve věku 43 let výstřelem ze vzdálenosti 40-50 cm. Tělo bylo na uzavřeném dvoře tesařské dílny, na kterém žil pes neurčité smíšené rasy. Pes přivábený krví řinoucí se z rány, zcela oddělil hlavu od trupu, odstranil všechny nitrohruďní orgány a přes hiatus diaphragmaticus vysál a sežral větší část žaludečního obsahu. Devastaci dokončily krysy a myši. Případ není vzácný, ale je třeba myslet na to, že poškození vzhledu těla může způsobit obtíže nebo dokonce znemožnit objektivizaci známek trestné činnosti.

Klíčová slova: postmortální poškození – dekapitace – poranění zvířaty

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It is frequent for the forensic pathologist to run into cases where there has been an interference on the state of a corpse caused by the local fauna (1); such interference can occur either when the corpse is left outdoor, for example in open countryside, or when the corpse is left indoor, for example in a flat. In particular, in the scientific literature – especially by the German authors – since the nineteenth century there are descriptions of post-mortem depredation by animals (2). All kinds of animals can interfere with the state of the corpse or its remains. At our latitudes (Italy) when the corpse is left in the open country, more frequently small rodents (mice and rats), dogs, cats, and sometimes foxes are responsible of this 'depredation'; differently, when the corpse is left in apartment – even if it can't be excluded the possibility of an occasional access to the site by an external animal – the investigation will be focused on the animal that lives in the apartment (3). If the corpse is left in the water, it should be considered the action of fish and crawfish (4). Here we present the case of the post-mortem depredation by the local fauna (a mongrel dog and small rodents), of the corpse

of a man, killed by gunshots, left in the courtyard of his isolated carpentry.

CASE REPORT

A 43 years old man was found dead in the courtyard of his isolated carpentry by the Police. The body was discovered lying supine, completely decapitated and in an advanced status of rigor mortis. The clothes were extensively soil-stained and, in detail, the sweater was largely torn in the front, blood-stained and characterized by two rounded and contiguous discontinuations in the left anterior region (one of the diameter of 2 cm and the other one of about 1 cm); these discontinuations appeared surrounded by a diffuse grey area as from 'smoke'. Next to the corpse a deformed ogive was found and, at the distance of 15 metres the skull too was found. A mongrel dog lived in this courtyard.

AUTOPSY FINDINGS

A complete post-mortem examination was performed 72 h after the investigation of the death scene. The examination of the skull revealed the absence of all the soft tissues (especially the complete loss of the floor of the mouth, so the hard palate was clearly visible); also the eyeballs and all the cartilaginous structures from the nose and ears were absent. The base of the

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