



Guidance on finding a suitable provider for specialist testing in wildlife crime investigations.

While the Forensic Science Regulator has made great strides in setting the standards to improve the quality of mainstream forensic analysis, there are still specialist fields which don't always fit the mould. Testing for wildlife cases may come under this banner, and some specialist services may be carried out in non-standard settings such as Museums and Universities. Here are a few pointers to consider when commissioning non-standard forensic testing for wildlife crime investigations to help you get the most appropriate service for casework:

DO

- ✓ Look for accredited providers! There are accredited veterinary pathologists, wildlife DNA specialists and analytical chemists that specialise in common wildlife poisons – use an accredited provider wherever possible.
- ✓ Consult the list of providers on the PAW Forensic Working Group (FWG) [website](#) or ask the NCA to search their register of experts (email: MCIS@nca.gov.uk).
- ✓ Ask the provider if the method has been validated, and whether there are validation documents they can provide for court.
- ✓ Ask the provider if their staff have experience or training in giving evidence to the court – in England and Wales they should be familiar with part 19 of the Criminal Procedure Rules.
- ✓ Ask the provider if they have procedures in place for chain of custody, and what security measures they have in place.
- ✓ Ask the provider to provide details of staff expertise and competence in the method (e.g., qualifications, years of experience and records of external proficiency test completion).
- ✓ If in doubt about a potential provider, ask for guidance from your in-house forensic team or the PAW FWG.

DON'T

- ✗ Necessarily trust “free” or very cheap testing. It might cost you the case if challenged at court when the provider hasn't validated their method or doesn't follow chain of custody procedures.
- ✗ Engage a provider to apply a method which has not been validated.
- ✗ Engage a provider to apply a method which has been validated by another lab, but not verified as acceptable within their own laboratory.
- ✗ Engage a provider who has no experience of forensic casework unless you have significant time to commit to helping them set up the documentation required such as chain of custody procedures and all of the laboratory records which may be required for court.
- ✗ Let someone's title convince you of their suitability. A Professor may be an expert in their own subject area, but it doesn't mean they are an expert in every aspect of that discipline.

There is a checklist of questions the PAW FWG has put together which you could send to potential providers to ask them to complete. It is available in Appendix C of “Wildlife Crime: A guide to the use of forensic and specialist techniques in the investigation of wildlife crime” which is accessible on our website.

And finally... don't forget to apply to the Forensic Analysis Fund to assist you with the cost of forensic testing in wildlife crime investigations! Details on how to apply on the [PAW Forensic Working Group website](#) - you must apply *before* you submit items for testing.