

Comparing procedures

Since ancient Greece, people have used dogs' keen sense of smell for criminal investigations. Scent lineups, which identify a person through scent alone, have been a controversial technique since the early 1900s.

To perform a scent lineup, a suspect's scent is captured on an object such as a gauze pad. Scents from other people are similarly taken. Those additional scents are used as decoys or foils. As in a photo lineup, the suspect's scent is laid out with the foils for comparison. The dog is given evidence to sniff, then smells each scent in the lineup, looking for a match. If the dog indicates the suspect's scent and the evidence match, it's considered a positive identification. Many canine experts point to the Dutch National Police as the model for how scent lineups should be run.

How Deputy Keith Pikett's methods compare to those used in the Netherlands:

Foils: the decoy samples



Pikett

- Pikett has a variety of decoy samples of human body scents in plastic bags that he carries from job to job in his SUV.
- Bags are sorted by gender and race.
- If a white male is a suspect, then white male foils are used.

Dutch police

- 12 people who live in the same area and are the same race and gender are brought in and asked to hold a gauze pad for three minutes. This creates fresh foils.
- Foils are placed in sterilized containers.
- Suspect's lawyer picks five samples for use in lineup.

The lineup

Pikett's method



Handling evidence

Pikett unpacks and deploys six cans with his bare. Pikett also allowed Detective Sam Eyre to handle scent sample with his bare hands during the Buchanek lineup. Pikett says the dogs are unaffected by smelling his scent or the observers scents since they are on all samples. If the hounds were matching the scent of whoever set up the test, they would indicate the first can as a match every time.

Pre-testing of dogs

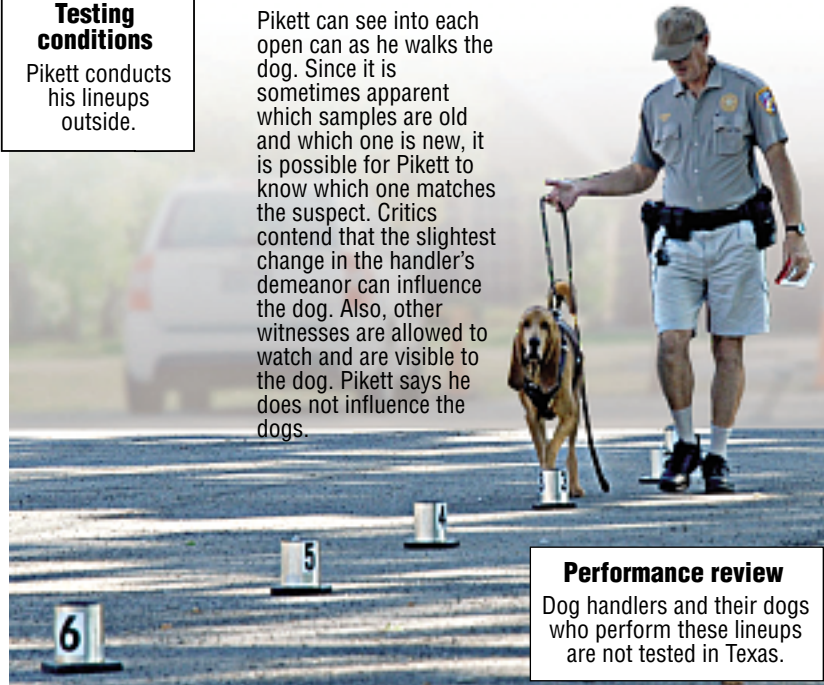
Many canine experts contend that even the best-trained dogs can have off days so they should be tested prior to the final lineup. In the two lineups witnessed by Advocate reporters, Pikett did not perform control tests.

Testing conditions

Pikett conducts his lineups outside.

Handler influence

Pikett can see into each open can as he walks the dog. Since it is sometimes apparent which samples are old and which one is new, it is possible for Pikett to know which one matches the suspect. Critics contend that the slightest change in the handler's demeanor can influence the dog. Also, other witnesses are allowed to watch and are visible to the dog. Pikett says he does not influence the dogs.



Performance review

Dog handlers and their dogs who perform these lineups are not tested in Texas.

Dutch police method

Handling evidence

All evidence is handled with rubber gloves to reduce contamination.



View of air purification system behind wall of stainless-steel cylinders

Pre-testing of dogs

At least two control tests are performed on a dog before it is allowed to participate in the lineup.

Testing conditions

Always takes place in specially built climate-controlled rooms to prevent the mingling of outside scents.

Each sample is placed into the back of eight stainless-steel cylinders. Purified air pushes the scent outwards when the dog puts its head into the cylinder.

Influencing the dog

Handlers, lawyers and witnesses are hidden from the dog's view in a sound-proof room with a two-way mirror for observation. The dog handler is not allowed to know which cylinder contains the suspect's scent.



Performance review

Dog handlers and their dogs who perform these lineups are tested once every two years in the Netherlands.

Source: leerburg.com/scent id, Suspect Discrimination, Adele Schoon & Ruud Haak