



# Accurate citations help build trust in scientific publications

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Accurate, reliable and verifiable data are the essence of solid scientific papers. Their interpretation should be supported by the well selected and correctly used/interpreted work of others. Authors who write their references in a careless way cause nightmares for many editors (1). However, a much more insidious problem is the one of misinterpreting the data/statements of the cited authors.

**Example 1:** published article, inaccurate citing detected by the cited author: *Sustainability* **2015**, *7*, 7195–7213; **Thompson K. et al.: What's in a Dog's Breakfast? Considering the Social, Veterinary and Environmental Implications of Feeding Food Scraps to Pets Using Three Australian Surveys.**

p. 7208: “In some central European countries such as Slovakia, scraps are the main source of food for dogs [48–51]. Furthermore, the processes of domestic food purchase, preparation and housework...is traditionally considered “women's work”.

48. Baranyiová, E.; Holub, A.; Tyrlik, M.; Janáčková, B.; Ernstová, M. The influence of urbanization on the behaviour of dogs in the **Czech Republic**. *Acta Vet. Brno* **2005**, *74*, 401–409.

49. Beard, T. The elimination of echinococcosis from **Iceland**. *Bull. World Health Organ.* **1973**, *48*, 653–660.

50. Fok, E.; Szatmari, V.; Busak, K.; Rozgonyi, F. Epidemiology: Prevalence of intestinal parasites in dogs in some urban and rural areas of **Hungary**. *Vet. Quart.* **2001**, *23*, 96–98.

51. Seimenis, A. Overview of the epidemiological situation on echinococcosis in the **Mediterranean** region. *Acta Trop.* **2003**, *85*, 191–195.

**Example 2:** published article, inaccurate citing uncovered by the cited author:

Dear M. Karabagli,

I recently read your case report “Bifid phallus with complete duplication and a separate scrotum in a German shepherd dog: a case report” published in *Veterinari Medicina*, *62*, **2017**. I am Dr. Saul A. Zucker, the main author of a case report cited in your references [Zucker SA, Root MV, Johnston SD (**1993**): Diphallia and polymelia in a dog. *Canine Practice*]. I would like to bring one item from your report to your attention. The last sentence on page 230 states that “**Also, this is the first case in the veterinary literature in which karyotypic analysis was performed.**”

I ask that you refer to page 19 of our case report where we stated “A piece of fascia was removed for fibroblast culture and **karyotype, which was normal (78XY).**”

In the following issue of the journal an appropriate correction was published.

**Corrigendum** <https://doi.org/10.17221/7/2019-VETMED>

**Example 3:** A questionable statement in a published article uncritically copied by a citing author, and detected by the editor during the reviewing procedure.

**Developmental histomorphometry of the tongue, esophagus, proventriculus and gizzard of ostriches (*Struthio camelus*)**

From Introduction: “Stomach is an organ responsible for the metabolic process in the body which in turn affects the bird's health condition like growth and development resulting in increase in the body weight (Mancevica and Mugurevics 2013)”.

In granivorous avian species the stomach (gizzard) is covered with a hard layer (koilin) protecting its wall from pressure of mechanical processing of food grains; hence it has no metabolic role. The authors were asked to delete this misleading citation.

## REFERENCES

1. Baranyiová E.: Detective stories: References in manuscripts. *European Science Editing* **39**(4), 2013: 100–101.
2. Fodor JG, Helis E, Yazdeghasti N, Vohnout B: “Fishing” for the Eskimos and heart disease story: facts or wishful story? *Canadian Journal of Cardiology* **30**, 2014: 864–868.

**Example 4:** Problems detected by the reviewer:

“The citations throughout the whole manuscript are not used appropriately. Here are a few examples. Neat et al. (line 41) – this study is a bone model study and does not mention anything about osteomyelitis, non-union etc.); Horne and Tanzer (line 41) – this is a human study; Macko and Szabo (line 43) – this is a human study; Carofino et al. (line 44) – this is a human study and citing the fact that there is a subcutaneous pain simply by extrapolating to dogs is not possible.”

**Example 5:** Problems detected by the reviewer:

“Inappropriate use of references. The authors state that Adams et al. (2017) describe femoral neck angle (FNA) as highly significant and frequently used measure. Upon my checking the article it turned out that it is only angle of inclination as related to acetabulum but not to femoral neck. More references are not cited accurately.”

**Example 6:** Additional search of WoS yielded this rather alarming issue with misinterpreted data on Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) with serious consequences (2).

## CONCLUSION

The above citation problems are possibly a result of the ever increasing pressures to publish quickly; some authors only superficially skim the literature to be used and do not allow their manuscripts to ripen before submission. However, it is important to point out this issue since it may be just the tip of an iceberg. Although it seems perhaps to be a minor problem compared to fraud and the fabrication of data that we presently witness, misinterpretations of concepts/data may have serious consequences, e.g. in the human health area.

## BULLET POINTS

- For authors: Beware - any of the authors that you cite/interpret incorrectly may claim such inconsistencies, even after a long time.
- Instructions for authors should include the following: “Select only relevant articles to support your work, read them *in extenso* thoroughly, and interpret their message accurately.”
- EASE Quick-Check Table and other checklists for authors should include the question: “Is the content of all the cited papers interpreted accurately?”
- Science writing courses for students should pay attention to this issue, using suitable examples.
- Editors and reviewers should occasionally compare the original cited papers with their citing in the manuscripts under preparation.

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