

FACULTY COLLOQUIUM

Wednesday

September 4, 2013

UC 222

12-12:50pm

**The Pig-of-the-
Month Club:
Seasonal
Variation in
Decomposition in
a High Altitude
Desert**

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Anthropology

Colorado Mesa University's Forensic Investigation Research Station is designed to examine decomposition in our local environment. The variables thought to significantly affect decomposition are time, temperature, and access of the body to insects. This project set out to test how well these suppositions applied to a high desert environment in western Colorado. Beginning in October 2012, one deceased swine a month was deposited in a fenced outdoor facility. Large mammalian scavengers were excluded, avian scavengers

were not.

Maggot masses were seen on all pigs, although at different times post-deposition, reflecting the annual change in temperature. All pigs plateaued at a level of desiccation, or mummification. At this point, generally the carcass consisted of a leathery cover with no visible skeletal elements or insect activity. Pigs moved past this stage, but not in their order of deposition, as would be thought where time, temperature, and access of the body to insects are the sole determinants of decomposition. The rate of decomposition appeared to be affected by the amount of humidity and available moisture in the initial phases of decomposition; approximately the first 30 days.



Please come with your lunch,
bring your faculty and staff
colleagues