



A prosecutor Tuesday rebutted defense claims that DNA testing of animal hairs found on some of the bodies in the notorious Atlanta child killings case are inconclusive, and he insisted the evidence links Wayne Williams to the slayings.

But the director of the University of California, Davis, lab that conducted the testing, Elizabeth Wictim, told The Associated Press that while the results are "fairly significant," they don't conclusively point to Williams' dog, Sheba, as the source of the hair.

"We didn't individualize," Wictim said.

Wictim's report, released Tuesday, says that 1 in 100 dogs in a database kept by the UC lab share the same DNA sequence in the hair found on the victims' bodies and the hair shed by Williams' dog. The database contains more than 1,200 dogs assembled from the last 10 to 15 years, Wictim said.

Ideally, the lab would want its database to include dogs from the time period of a murder and the location of a murder, but that isn't always possible, Wictim said. The murders Williams was blamed for occurred more than 25 years ago.

The lab conducted a type of testing on the hairs called mitochondrial DNA testing. Wictim noted that there wasn't enough chromosomal DNA in the samples to conduct a more definitive type of testing called nuclear DNA testing.

Whether District Attorney Paul Howard is right that the results should remove any doubt that Williams is the killer _ or defense lawyers are right that Howard is exaggerating _ the burden was still on Williams to prove his innocence, and the testing on the animal hairs does not do that.

Both sides are still awaiting the results of tests on other evidence being conducted by the FBI. The defense ultimately hopes to win a new trial for Williams.

"Essentially we had hoped that this evidence would be part of a basis for a new trial," defense attorney Jack Martin said of the animal hair testing. "It's not. So, we're looking toward the other testing to see if that is helpful."

In February, a Superior Court judge ordered the testing at the request of lawyers for Williams, who was convicted of killing two people and blamed for 22 other murders in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The judge ordered that animal hairs found on some of the victims be compared to samples of hairs from Williams' dog.

Also, human hairs admitted into evidence were to be compared to samples of Williams' DNA, and a car seat admitted into evidence along with the clothing from two of the victims was to be analyzed.

Williams also was ordered to provide swabs of saliva and/or blood for DNA samples to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for testing.

The UC lab conducted the animal hair testing, while the FBI was involved in the testing of the other evidence, officials involved in the case said. The GBI coordinated the testing.

Howard said Tuesday at a news conference held at a local radio station that seven dog hairs from five of the murder cases were compared to hairs from Williams' dog.

"All seven hairs tested are the same as Sheba's, the dog of Wayne Williams," Howard said. "The test was not inconclusive as some have already started to spin."

He added, "This testing finally settles the debate over whether Wayne Williams was the Atlanta child killer. He is."

However, Wictim's report said the hairs on the bodies contained the same DNA sequence as Williams' dog, which means Sheba can't be excluded as the source. Williams' lawyers believe that means the tests are inconclusive as far as a link to Williams' dog.

"It surprises me that you're trying to do the same thing as back in 1982, and that is use incomplete evidence," another Williams attorney, Lynn Whatley, told Howard at the news conference Tuesday. "Justice has not been done in this case. The conclusions they are making are not correct."

Between 1979 and 1981, 29 blacks, mostly boys, were killed in the Atlanta area, sparking fear throughout the region.

Williams was convicted of murdering Jimmy Ray Payne, 21, and Nathaniel Cater, 27, and sentenced to two consecutive life terms. Evidence of a pattern of conduct in 12 of the murders was used in his trial. Afterward, officials declared Williams responsible for 22 other deaths, and those cases were closed.

Williams has always maintained his innocence, but has lost numerous court battles.

Williams' lawyers say the DNA tests they were seeking were not available when Williams went to trial in 1982.

Williams, who is black, has contended that he was framed.

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