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Bug bite blamed for death of student

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By STEVE ROCK The Kansas City Star

A student who attended a private boot camp in Kidder, Mo., and died last month had been bitten by an insect or a spider, perhaps a brown recluse.

Caldwell County Coroner Gary Brown, who received autopsy reports Wednesday, said they showed the student's death was the result of complications from the bite.

The 15-year-old student has not been named.

He attended Thayer Learning Center Boot Camp and Boarding School in Kidder, which is about 50 miles north of Kansas City just off Interstate 35.

Both Brown and Caldwell County Sheriff Kirby Brelsford said there were bruises on his body, but there was no sign that the student's death was caused by abuse or mistreatment.

"Any kid who's in a boot camp is going to have some bruises," Brown said. "That's just the way it is. They are pretty physically active over there. It is a boot camp. It's not a bed and breakfast."

Brelsford said the bruising could have been caused by the bite.

Officials at Thayer Learning Center could not be reached for comment after details emerged Wednesday evening.

According to published reports, the student was not engaged in any physical activity when he died Nov. 3. He had not been at Thayer long, and he appeared to be healthy when he arrived.

Brown said the autopsy indicated that as much as a week could have elapsed between the time the student was bitten and the time he died. Unclear was how much medical attention the student received during that span.

The student was from California.

Thayer Learning Center is a military-type home for troubled teens ages 13 to 17. It has about 100 students.

It is not required to be licensed by the state.

Reach Steve Rock at (816) 234-4338 or srock@kcstar.com.