

Neb. father leads police to toddler's gravesite

by Cheryl McDermott

Police recovered the remains of a toddler from a shallow grave on an abandoned farmstead in Butler County, Nebraska early Friday morning, and have the homicide suspect in custody -- the child's 22-year old father, authorities reported.

Lucas J. Peterson The father of 14-month-old Trista Peterson of Pleasant Dale has been in jail since March 28 when he was arrested by the Seward County Sheriff's Office on an outstanding warrant. At the time of his arrest, authorities reported, Lucas J. Peterson was the custodial parent of the toddler, and said he didn't know where she was.

On Thursday, the father led investigators to the gravesite. The Nebraska State Patrol Major Case Unit was called in and a crime scene was established.

On Friday, Nebraska State Patrol assisted by the Seward and Butler County Sheriff's Offices recovered the body of the child from a shallow grave in a grove of cedar trees, three miles south of Highway 92 off of County Road P in Butler County.

An autopsy to determine the cause of death is pending.

"We are investigating the death of little Trista as a homicide," said Seward County Attorney Wendy Elston. "We have the father of the little girl in custody and are continuing our investigation into the circumstances surrounding her death."

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