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Middletown dealt with dog legislation

By Dave Greber

Staff Writer

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

Local dog owners have fought against legislation that they said punishes them for raising particular breeds of canine.

Saturday night, James King of South Fifth Street in Hamilton was attacked by three Boxers owned by his neighbor. As King talked with dog owner Linda Martin, the Boxers leapt over a waist-high chain link fence and bit him repeatedly in the ear, arm, leg and chest.

The attack left King with 75 stitches and Martin denying that her three pure-bred Boxers were vicious.

"They're not vicious," Martin said Monday morning, talking with Butler County dog wardens. "It was a mix-up. They were protecting me. They were protecting their space."

According to state law, any dog that bites a human is considered vicious and must be quarantined. Dog owners are also typically cited, as was the case Monday with Martin. Hamilton follows state laws when it comes to canine ordinances, said county Dog Warden Lt. Julie Holmes.

Hamilton's neighboring city to the north recently nixed its breed-specific canine ban.

Two months ago, Middletown City Council removed the ordinance that targeted pit bulls and pit bull mixes.

Last September, several residents questioned the breed-specific designation of pit bulls as vicious.

At the time, local legislators said the council's 2005 decision to designate pit bulls as vicious dogs may have been made in haste.

A study was requested after Garfield Street resident Marie Kelley, a former pit bull owner, presented statistics to the Middletown council that were contrary to research that led to the restriction in June 2005. That change made pit bull owners who already lived in the city 30 days to register their pets, show proof of a state-mandated \$100,000 insurance policy and abide by particular confinement.

The amended dog ordinance approved March 7 banned chaining animals and beefed up penalties for irresponsible pet owners.

Holmes said she knows of no plans to alter Hamilton's pet ordinances.

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