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Woman mauled when she attempts to feed fenced dogs while housesitting

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Los Lunas A Los Lunas woman has been charged with five misdemeanor counts of owning vicious animals after her dogs allegedly attacked a pregnant family member Monday morning.

According to a criminal complaint filed with Belen Magistrate Court, the animal owners' five Rhodesian Ridgeback dogs mauled her pregnant 18-year-old niece at the owner's rural Los Lunas residence.

Valencia County Sheriff's Deputy Shannon Brady, who responded to the scene, said the teenager "had lacerations and puncture wounds pretty much from head to toe."

The deputy said that the young woman was conscious upon her arrival and was taken from the scene to University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque.

Angela Heisel, a public affairs representative from the hospital, said the victim was released Wednesday afternoon.

Undersheriff Bill Martinez asked that the women's names not be released "because of possible ramifications" unrelated to the incident.

The five dogs — one of which had a history of vicious behavior — were taken into custody by the Valencia County Animal Control Department Monday and were euthanized with the owners' consent on Wednesday morning, said Valencia County Animal Control Director Anne Aragon.

An attempt to reach the dog owner was unsuccessful on Friday.

Aragon said that one of the five dogs had been in the animal control department's custody on two separate occasions for biting and had been reclaimed by the owner each time after serving the state-mandated 10-day quarantine at the animal shelter.

"We've also had occasional reports of the dogs running loose in the neighborhood," Aragon said.

According to Brady, the teenage victim was house-sitting while her aunt was out of town and was attacked while trying to feed the dogs.

The "dogs were in a fenced yard, and the young lady was able to get out of the yard and get the fence closed behind her," said Brady. "She was lying on the ground when rescue got there, and they called for more help because she was unable to get up off the ground."

The victim's 2-year-old daughter was in the dog owner's house at the time of the attack but was unharmed, Brady said.

According to the deputy, the victim's father arrived on the scene after the alleged attack and helped put the dogs into kennels on the property. Two dogs escaped the kennel and began running loose in the yard but all were eventually apprehended and taken into custody by animal control officers.

"The Rhodesian Ridgebacks were extremely aggressive and vicious, even toward us," said Brady.

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