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### Woman fights off coyotes to save dog

By Tillie Fong, Rocky Mountain News

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LAKESWOOD - A woman was bitten by a coyote Monday morning after she pried its jaws open to free her dog from the coyote's clutches at Belmar Park.

"All I could think about was getting my dog back, that 'my dog is not going to be your breakfast today,' " Bonny Jeffers, 48, an administrator with Denver Public Schools, said Tuesday.



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John Paul Mendoza, 14, and his mother, Bonny Jeffers, 48, both of Lakewood, check on the welfare of Deuce, a 13-year-old rat terrier, Tuesday at VCA Anderson Animal Hospital. Coyotes attacked Deuce before Jeffers intervened during a walk Monday at Belmar Park.

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"They were going to eat her. They were going to take her back to the den as food for their pups."

Jeffers was taken to St. Joseph Hospital on Monday and was treated and released for bites on her chin and a finger on her left hand.

Deuce, a 13-year-old female rat terrier that was attacked by one of the two coyotes, was recovering at a veterinary clinic Tuesday.

She has a punctured thorax and bruised lungs and has been put on oxygen as well as antibiotics. She is being fed intravenously.

"She's stable for now, so things are looking good," said Joni Edwards, medical director for the Veterinary Clinics of America Anderson on Tuesday.

The attack occurred about 8 a.m. Monday when Jeffers was walking two of her own dogs - Bella, a 2-year-old female Akita husky, and Pepe, a 6-year-old male Chihuahua - and Deuce, who belonged to her neighbor, Claudia Salvestrin, 37.

All three dogs were on retractable leashes with a range of 15 to 20 feet. Jeffers said Deuce is an older dog, and she lagged behind Jeffers, while the two other dogs ran in front of her.

As Jeffers approached the pavilion near the lake at Belmar Park, she turned a corner around a bush and a trash can and lost sight of Deuce momentarily.

That was when two coyotes attacked.

"I heard her (Deuce) go 'rrrowwrrr' and I turned and ran to see what was going on," said Jeffers.

"I saw two coyotes, 65 pounds each, and one had Deuce already in its mouth and (was) carrying her by the back."

Jeffers said she dropped the leashes on Bella and Pepe and ran after the coyote carrying Deuce.

"I caught up with the coyote, punched him in the face, trying to get my dog out," she said.

"I pried open the (coyote's) face and got his teeth on my finger. He dropped it and turned on me. He turned around and bit me on my chin," she said.

Even after the coyote bit her, all Jeffers could think of was getting help for Deuce, she said.

An older man who was taking a stroll around the lake with his wife came to Jeffers' aid, as well as a woman who lived across the street from the park, she said.

"She thought the coyote attacked me," Jeffers said.

"But the coyote was doing what it was supposed to be doing - which was trying to get prey for its pups, and I was doing what I was supposed to be doing."

While paramedics tended to Jeffers, two firefighters from Westminster Fire Station No. 7 rushed Deuce, with her owner, Salvestrin, to an animal emergency hospital.

Jeffers asked to be taken home.

Once there, she washed up, got her two boys, John Paul, 14, and Dexter, 18, and rushed off to check on Deuce.

"We stayed about three hours, and Claudia took me to the emergency room at St. Joseph's," she said.

"I did not know I had a bite on my left finger. I'm hurting today, but at the time, with the adrenaline going, you don't think about yourself."

Jeffers and Salvestrin moved Deuce on Tuesday morning to the VCA Anderson. They spent about \$2,300 in emergency care for Deuce.

Animal control officers were looking for the coyotes that Jeffers encountered Monday but haven't located them.

There are warning signs about wildlife in the park, as coyotes are often seen in the area, according to Steve Davis, spokesman for Lakewood police. But until Monday, there had not been a case of a coyote biting a person.

"I could not recall ever that a coyote bit someone in the area," he said. "It's very, very rare, and even in this case, it's a little bit different. It was not an unprovoked attack."

Jeffers said she does not plan to return to Belmar Park with her dogs. "It's a beautiful park, but I'm not going there anymore," she said.

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