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Family pet attacked by dogs

By Emily Young
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LUNENBURG -- Taxi, an 11-year-old mutt, wore a blood-spotted T-shirt Monday morning as she slowly roamed the yard of her owner Owen Tallman.

Three Bernese Mountain dogs, roughly twice Taxi's size, attacked her a little more than a week ago. The owner of the Bernese Mountain dogs took off after the attack without offering an apology, contact information, or mention of retribution, Tallman says.

Tallman and his wife, Susan, took Taxi for a hike on June 4 in Sharon, N.H., along the Wapack Trail.

They walked no more than a few hundred yards before they saw the three large dogs off their leashes. Taxi, too, was off a leash and walking roughly 75 feet ahead of the Tallmans.

"It happened very quickly before I was able to size up the situation," Tallman said.

Initially, Taxi didn't appear to be hurt too badly. But wound after wound opened up, oozing fluid, during the days following the attack. She underwent surgery Wednesday, and will have another one.

"She has, oh, a one-foot incision. She'll need surgery to close the (still open) wound. It's hardening up open, so she'll probably need a skin graft," Tallman said.

Alice Moon-Fanelli, a clinical assistant professor at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in North Grafton, said it's very hard to break up a dog fight once it ensues.

"The problem is, it's very easy to get hurt. If you had something physical to put in between the dogs, like a board, that's fine. It's ideal to have both owners present," Moon-Fanelli said.

Moon-Fanelli also noted there are leash laws in most Massachusetts cities and towns for a reason.

"If the dogs need to run, they need to run in a supervised area. If you're hiking with a dog off-leash, they need to respond 100 percent to verbal commands. It's for your own dog's protection," she said.