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## Horrified owner, kids see shepherd kill their little pet

By Kim Smith  
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Sherry Savage and her kids broke with tradition Friday night.

Instead of taking their miniature Pomeranians, Cinnamon and Lily, to Reid Park, they took them to the dog park within Palo Verde Park.

Cinnamon never made it home.

"This dog shot over to us and grabbed Cinnamon by the back of the neck and started mauling her," Savage, 44, said. "I started kicking it and when I scooped her up, it went for Lily."

As her sons, Colin, 10, and Jack, 7, watched in horror, Savage juggled Cinnamon and kicked frantically at the shepherd mix attacking Lily.

Savage fell to the ground as the dog's owners and other dog lovers came running to the scene, alerted by the screams and barking dogs.

Someone, somehow rescued the 5-pound Lily from the clutches of the 35-pound shepherd, who was then put back on her leash.

"As I was running to the car, Cinnamon went limp," Savage said Tuesday, her voice breaking. "I'm fairly certain she died in my arms."

Lily suffered neck and leg injuries in the attack. She was released from a nearby animal hospital after nearly five hours of tests and a shot of morphine. Still traumatized, she refuses to go outside.

While there aren't many fatal dog attacks at dog parks - enclosed areas where dogs are allowed to run free - they do generate a lot of calls to the Pima Animal Care Center, said Mark Soto, enforcement operations supervisor.

"We do get complaints on a regular basis from people who are upset because their dogs have been attacked or an owner has brought in a large dog who is being unruly or a dog that doesn't have its tags," Soto said.

Two local parks, Reid and McDonald District, also generate calls because while they have designated areas for large and small breeds, some pet owners tend to ignore the designations.

"It's strictly up to the owners to abide by the rules, and unfortunately, you've got some small dogs with a big dog complex," Soto said. "There are some Chihuahuas that will take on anyone and then you've got some large dogs that will naturally play pretty rough."

Savage said she didn't realize Palo Verde Park didn't have an area

### What dog owners need to know

- It doesn't matter where or even what your dog attacks, it can be costly.

According to Tucson city codes, a pet owner whose dog bites, attempts to bite or otherwise injures a person or another animal can be found guilty of a misdemeanor.

As a result, that person can be fined anywhere from \$200 to \$2,500. In addition, the city code says violators can be jailed up to six months.

Moreover, if a magistrate declares the dog "vicious or destructive," the dog can be euthanized, banned from the city limits, spayed or neutered.

A pet owner whose dog has been declared "dangerous" by the Pima Animal Care Center and chooses to keep the dog must jump through a series of hoops, said Mark Soto, enforcement operations supervisor.

The pet owner must either invest in a fully enclosed kennel run with padlocks or build a 6-foot-high fence with a 45-degree incline at the top and concrete at the bottom to prevent the dog from digging underneath.

The pet owner must also muzzle the dog, post "Dangerous Dog" signs, obtain \$50,000 in liability insurance, spay or neuter the dog and get the dog tattooed with a tracking number.

While pet insurance might be necessary to cover the costs of major operations or a danger-

designated for small breeds when she took the dogs there Friday night. She still thought her dogs were safe under her watchful eyes, however.

Michael Lent, a veterinarian at Pantano Animal Clinic, said it's rare to see dogs that have been harmed during fights in parks or on the street.

But owners still need to be careful, especially with small dogs, Lent said.

"It's like if you go to the playground," he said. "If some big kids are throwing kids off the swing set, then you may say, 'OK, maybe this isn't the right time for my 3- or 4-year-old to be there.' "

Owners who decide to take their dogs to dog parks need to follow some basic rules, said Soto and Marsh Myers, director of education and community outreach for the Humane Society of Southern Arizona.

"You can't just turn your dog loose and get on your cell phone or start reading a book," Soto said. "You've got to pay attention to your dog and everyone else's so you know when they are getting too rambunctious."

Myers said dogs should have some social skills before even playing in a dog park.

"It's overwhelming to be the new arrival and have all these other dogs sniffing you," he said.

Daily walks, short trips and regular contact with other dogs are all important to ensuring that yours has the preparedness for a trip to a dog park, Myers said.

"It's really the pet owner's responsibility to decide what level they are on" before letting a dog loose in a park, Myers said.

Savage didn't report Friday's incident to anyone because of the ages of the dog's owners and their regret at what happened. Their roommate even drove her to the pet hospital, she said.

Ian and Hannah Trushell agreed to pay the cost of Cinnamon's cremation (\$62) and Lily's medical bills (\$457).

On Sunday, the couple gave the dog, Jasmine, back to the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, where they had just adopted her three weeks prior.

"We felt horrible about what happened and we had another incident after that," said Ian Trushell, 21. "Jasmine attacked one of our other pets, a lizard, and killed it."

They had been told Jasmine, who was about 1, had originally been taken to the Humane Society because she played too rough with an older dog.

Trushell said he told Humane Society personnel about the attacks and he's convinced Jasmine would do well in a home with larger dogs.

"I don't think she was trying to kill them," Trushell said. "I think she was so excited she was playing too rough. I don't think that big dogs get that (smaller dogs) are other dogs because they are so small and they're so different."

After what happened, Trushell said he believes small dogs need to have their own parks because "even if everyone's careful, there are going to be unpredictable things that will happen."

People should learn from their experience, Trushell said.

"Make sure you know your dog really well, especially when they are older dogs that have been adopted," he said. "We had taken Jasmine to the park a couple of times before and she was OK, but there weren't a lot of

prone dog, most homeowners' insurance policies will cover injuries resulting from dog brawls.

If your dog is attacked, or does the attacking, your homeowner's plan will cover the costs up to your regular limit, said Cheryl Willis-Blakes, a Phoenix-based State Farm Insurance spokeswoman.

If your dog is involved in a fight, ask the other owner for insurance information and report the incident to your agent, she said.

"It's similar to an auto accident," Willis-Blakes said.

other dogs around."

Soto said he has been told by the Humane Society that Jasmine will be euthanized.

Dog parks are wonderful places for dogs to socialize, but their owners must be responsible, Soto said. The dogs must be watched constantly, properly vaccinated and in good health.

If your dog ever attacks something, Soto said take care to avoid being bitten yourself.

You should try calling the dog's name or making a loud noise to distract it. If that doesn't work, you should fashion the dog's leash into a loop and try to get it around the dog's neck, tail or midsection to pull it away.

Spraying the dog's nose with water or using a cane around the dog's collar might work, too, Soto said.

If the dog and its owner leave after an attack without providing you with contact information, try to get a license plate number, Soto said. Animal control officers will go to a pet owner's home with law enforcement officers to investigate.

As for Lily, she'll have to get her exercise at home.

"I'll never go to a dog park again, never," Savage said. "I was always very careful with these dogs because they are so small, but this dog just came out of the blue."

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