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Dog-attack victim spared rabies shots

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GULFPORT - The Shaw family of Gulfport recently got some news that let them breathe a sigh of relief: Their young son, who was mauled by two dogs Dec. 3, won't have to undergo a series of painful rabies shots.

"We now have no worries about rabies," said Sean Shaw, the father of 5-year-old Thomas Hill. The fears of Shaw and his wife, Melissa, were relieved after owners of the dogs were located and furnished proof both animals had been vaccinated for rabies, as required by state law.

Thomas had been playing outside the family's home at Magnolia Terrace on a Sunday evening when he was attacked by two large German shepherds that were apparently loose. The boy told his parents he had been playing with the dogs before they turned on him.

He managed to fend them off with a stick and made his way into the house, battered and suffering bite wounds to his neck, thighs and back. The boy's left eyelid was also ripped during the attack.

In spite of the ordeal, he was able to describe the dogs, Shaw said.

The boy was taken by ambulance to Memorial Hospital at Gulfport and received multiple stitches.

A search began for the dogs, which had run into a wooded area and eluded police after the incident. That left the family worried that if the animals were not located soon, Thomas would be forced to undergo multiple rabies injections.

After the Sun Herald published a story Dec. 8 on the incident, both the newspaper and Gulfport Police received calls and e-mails from readers living in the area around the 3600 block of 11th Avenue. That information eventually led police to the owners of the dogs, who lived about two blocks away, Sean Shaw said.

"Our biggest concern was finding out whether the animals had rabies shots," he said late in the week. "We finally got proof of that on Thursday."