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## Girl bitten by dog begins rabies shots

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### SWANSEA

The parents of a 9-year-old girl bitten by a roaming dog last week are taking no chances, and the girl has begun anti-rabies shots.

Katherine Effinger received on Sunday night the first shot of a series required to vaccinate against the potentially deadly disease. She must get four more over the next month.

She and friends were running between playgrounds at Wolf Branch Elementary School during unseasonably warm weather on Jan. 8 when a dog with a black face, possibly a German shepherd mix, raced up and clamped down on her calf.

The dog "looked kind of raggedy," said Katherine, a third-grader at Wolf Branch and the daughter of Karen and Robert Effinger. She added that there may have been an owner with spiked black hair walking next to it. But the dog was unkempt enough that "it might be a stray," she said.

The bite, now healed, broke the skin. During the past week, the family passed out fliers hoping to identify the dog and head off the painful shots. Police even took Katherine to view biting suspects. None matched her memory of the attack. They ranged from a schnauzer (too small) to a too-big German shepherd.

Police are still looking. Anyone with information can call Swansea Deputy Police Chief Mike Arnold at 618-234-4110.

Dr. Tom Byrne, emergency room director at Belleville Memorial Hospital, said it has been a year or more since he last saw rabies vaccinations given as the result of a dog bite.

That's because the dogs are usually traceable and can be tested for rabies, or the owners have had them vaccinated. It's rare for dogs to actually have rabies, he said. The disease is more common among wild animals like skunks and bats, but their contact with people is rare.

Karen Effinger said Katherine will now get the shots, even if the dog is located, just to be safe. A week after the bite, Katherine appeared in good spirits and not too worried about the upcoming shots in her shoulders she will need over the next month. In compensation, she is getting a motorized scooter.

If confronted by the dog again, she said, "I'd bite him back."

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