



Family's shock as pet Labrador attacks baby son

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By REBECCA MARSHALL THE father of a baby boy who was mauled by the family's Labrador has warned other parents to on their children whenever they are around dogs.

Jamie Baxter says he doesn't blame George, the Kureelipa family's five-year-old pet, and the traumatic experience has not put another dog in the future.

But he and his partner Anthea were still struggling to explain why the dog suddenly turned on their 17-month-old son Samuel evening.

"We've had George since he was 10 weeks old," Mr Baxter said. "They were just playing 15 feet away from us and we heard Samuel just started screaming and it was the most hideous scream you have ever heard.

"It looked like his whole eye had opened up. We rushed him to hospital but because he had just had dinner, he had to wait for surgery.

"That was the hardest thing, trying to hold him while he's screaming in pain and there's blood everywhere ... it was a nightmare.

The toddler needed 50 stitches to his face to repair lacerations above and below his left eye as well as punctures and grazes.

"It's been hell," Mr Baxter said. "I've cried myself to sleep every night. The first night I kept thinking what if I had done this or that when you see your child hurt, you can't help but blame yourself.

"On Sunday, he couldn't smile and it was really hard to see him like that, but by Monday, he was smiling and laughing and I thought he was a boy."

The family returned home from hospital yesterday to a backyard without George, who has been put down.

"We had to put him down because we would never have looked at him the same way," he said. "We would have panicked, wondering when it was going to happen again."

Mr Baxter, who's partner Anthea is due to give birth to a second son in April, said it was such an unexpected and unprovoked attack.

"Labradors are family pets," he said. "They use them as seeing-eye dogs, you just don't expect them to turn on a child, especially one with whom you have such a bond with.

"He was the biggest sook and he used to get beaten up by our cats – this was just so out of the blue."

Mr Baxter said he would consider buying another dog in a few years.

"Next time I'm getting him a fish," he joked. "Later on we will get another dog, once the boys have grown up a bit.

Samuel's still got two cats but he'll miss George. I don't believe it's the breed, it's just the individual dog."



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