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Dog attacks retiree and pet near Boiling Springs

 By [Eric Harkreader](#), March 03, 2006

South Middleton resident Lance Percival always knew it's a dog-eat-dog world.

But until this week he thought it was just a figure of speech.

On Wednesday afternoon the 66-year-old retiree took his 7-year-old springer spaniel for a walk near the Appalachian Trail where it runs by the Boiling Springs Pool when he and the pet were attacked by a dog on the loose.

What he finds most disturbing is that the dog's owner, who came running over as the attack happened, refused to identify himself and fled.

Talking loudly

It all began at about noon when Percival came upon a man and a woman in their 40s by Yellow Breeches Creek.

"There was a couple talking in loud voices... and I couldn't tell if they were having a fight or just speaking loud" because of noise from the creek, he says.

When he got between 50 and 100 yards of the two, a dark-colored, mixed-breed dog rushed Percival and his walking mate, Bell.

"It was like a shot... just came racing over like an attack dog," Percival says.

In the next few moments — it felt like 10 minutes, he says — the attacking dog "ripped apart" his 30-pound companion literally right on top of Percival, who had fallen down.

He remembers the man coming over and pulling off his dog.

"It took him three times... (he) pulled the dog off and (the dog) kept running back," Percival says.

Although Percival, who says he was "shaking like a leaf" afterwards, doesn't remember exactly what was said, he does know the man wouldn't identify himself and didn't offer to help.

In addition to the numerous places where Bell — who survived, — was ripped open, Percival was covered in his dog's blood.

He also had a few scratches and a cut on his hand, although he thinks it was from the fall or possibly even the other dog's claws rather than a bite.

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After the man left, Percival says the woman also left — again without offering to help or saying anything.

Dog survives

Percival rushed his dog to a veterinarian, who spent hours stitching her back together.

Now Percival wants to see the man who left the scene step up to claim responsibility.

In addition to his own concerns, Percival says he's worried about the possibility of future attacks: "You see children back there, you know, even (baby) strollers."

But even more urgent than that is the need to identify the dog's history and any possible exposures to rabies.

U.S. Park Service Ranger Todd Remaley agrees.

"We need to get the history of the dog. ... Getting full information is really important, just like if you're involved in an accident," he says.

While the attack didn't happen on the Appalachian Trail where he patrols, it was nearby and similar to past incidents.

State police are handling the report and met with Percival soon after he reported it.

"I know we'd all like to think our dog doesn't bite, but the truth is, it happens," Remaley says. "Like any animal, even domesticated ones, they can be unpredictable."

In the past year and a half, Remaley says he's handled four or five incidents where dogs caused a problem for trail users or residents living nearby, including at least one time when a trail user was bitten.

Leash required

He's quick to point out that most dog owners respect other people and the trail's regulations.

As for the exceptions, he says it's probably a matter of simple ignorance of the law.

On the trail, as in many townships including South Middleton, dogs are required to be on a leash.

"We ask folks to be mindful of other people and to step aside if you have a dog as other trail users are walking by... Don't let the dogs chase wildlife, don't let the dogs off leash, don't let the dogs go into a water source" such as springs or creeks, he says.

And of course: "Picking up after your dog is a no-brainer," he says.

As for violaters, Remaley says it's a little-known fact that any federal park rule violation is a misdemeanor and an arrestable offense.

He rarely uses this power, though, as he believes a warning or, at worst, a small fine is appropriate.

Rangers are also obligated to shoot dogs that pose a threat to humans or wildlife in the area.

In many cases, he says, people just don't realize how problematic it can be for dogs to run free — both for the sake of wildlife and for other hikers.

Remaley says he frequently encounters a dog that's running hundreds of yards in front of its owners on the trail.

"I'm pretty good at reading dogs; I like dogs," he says. "But were I to be a child running ahead of my family, and I scream when I see the dog, we can't predict what it's going to do — and we shouldn't have to."

Pepper spray likely

As for Percival's case, Remaley says it's important to find the owner.

"I would hope that the people would recognize afterward that they need to come forward — especially if they realize that (Percival) has to decide whether or not to get a rabies shot."

Percival is not sure whether he will return to the scenic area.

"I've had enough close calls like this," he says.

If he does, though, he says he will be sure to bring "a big can of pepper spray."

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