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Attacking dog shot by police in Cape

By Rachel Myers
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Originally posted on September 14, 2006

Vanessa Kurowski paced her driveway Wednesday morning with blood on her shirt and in her doorway, fuming on a cell phone about how "the cops shot my dog."

Cape Coral police were called to her home at 715 S.W. 8th Place after her dog, a 2-year-old mixed-breed female named Momo, reportedly bit two bicyclists before lunging at a police officer, who then shot Momo in the chest.

No one was seriously injured, but Ria Brown, spokeswoman for Lee County Animal Services, said the dog's rabies vaccination was outdated by several months.

Kurowski, who owns the dog with her friend, countered that Momo was up-to-date on shots, but her tags had expired.

Cape Coral has 221 reported dog bites this year, more than any other city in Lee County. Last year, about 40 percent of the reported bites in the county came from Cape Coral.

According to Kurowski, Momo was in "really critical" condition, and is being cared for by Kindness West Animal Hospital on Cape Coral Parkway. Veterinarian Linda Green said late Wednesday that she could not comment on the condition of Momo due to patient confidentiality.

Kurowski could not be reached late Wednesday for an update on Momo's condition.

She said earlier the dog had never bitten anyone before.

"She is a kid lover," she said. "She is only aggressive if provoked. They probably tried to do something with my dog. They probably got offended the dog was running around and tried to do something to push the dog away."

Sgt. Chris Ellis said at the scene that it is likely Kurowski will be cited. He said the dog was shot by officer Rob Wardrop in the owner's driveway.

Police were called to the scene around 7:45 a.m. when someone called claiming a dog had bitten a man on a bicycle. After police arrived, Momo reportedly attacked a second cyclist who was carrying a toy poodle in a basket atop his front wheel. When Wardrop attempted to intervene, the dog lunged at him, prompting him to fire, Ellis said.

In the police department's history, only five officers have fired their weapons at humans, but it is unclear how many have shot at or killed animals.

Zedeker said policy allows officers to shoot an animal if it is severely injured or a threat to others.

"Such destruction requires that it can be done safely with regard to the other persons and property," Zedeker wrote in an e-mail. "Headshots should be avoided if the necessity for rabies tests exists."

A rabies test cannot be done without euthanizing the



Todd Stubing/news-press.com

Officers Steve Corlew, front right, and John Lewis, back right, talk with Steve, who would only give his first name, on Wednesday after he was bitten on the leg by a mixed-breed dog near the intersection of Southwest 8th Place and Southwest 47th Terrace in Cape Coral. The dog, named Momo, was shot after she tried to attack Steve and his poodle and a Cape police officer.

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2006 BITE CASES

Lee County

January

59

February

62

March

74

April

70

May

62

June

60

July

59

August

N/A

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30

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animal, Brown said, so it is standard procedure to have it quarantined for 10 days in order to look for signs of illness. Even if Momo recovers before the next 10 days, she will have to stay quarantined at the animal hospital until at least Sept. 22.

In Lee County, there is no limit on how many times a dog can bite a person before it must be euthanized, but Brown said an investigation by Animal Services may be conducted to determine whether Momo should be labeled dangerous, which could be costly. Kurowski could get hit with a \$500 fine, \$1,500 registration fee and another \$500 registration fee every year after that. Plus, signs would have to be posted at her home warning others, and the dog would have to wear a muzzle when venturing off the property.

Currently, there is only one dog in the city that carries that label, Brown said.

The alleged victim who toted a toy poodle in his bicycle basket would identify himself only as Steve. His calf was bandaged in the spot where he had been bitten, but neither he nor the other victim had to be hospitalized.

"I don't know what was the matter with him," the victim said of Momo, not realizing the dog is female. "I had to kick him hard in the head just to get him off me. If they hadn't shot him, I'm sure he would have bitten somebody else."

But Kurowski said Momo was well-liked on the block, and several neighborhood kids came by because they were upset she was hurt. She said dogs run free in her neighborhood "all the time," and criticized how police handled the situation.

"She has not been aggressive," she said. "I think there are other ways to do it."

Brown said someone approached by a seemingly aggressive dog should not attempt to run. That triggers a canine's chase instinct. Rather, she recommended lying on the ground, belly down, feet tucked under, protecting the head.

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