

Sheriff's office nabs 3 dogs in attack on toddler

By Evan Caldwell

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The Lewis County Sheriff's Office reported Monday that it has caught three of the estimated five to seven dogs that attacked a 1-year old Onalaska boy last Tuesday.

In another development, Lewis County Sheriff Steve Mansfield said Monday that both the owner of the dog and the parents of the child share responsibility for the tragedy. He also expressed frustration with dog owners' who don't control their pets.

The condition of the boy is unknown because his name has yet to be released. The case remains under investigation.

On Wednesday, the child's mother told Lewis County Sheriff's investigators that the boy had been upgraded from critical to stable and was still in intensive care, but his injuries are no longer considered life-threatening. Detective Sergeant Stacy Brown said Monday that the sheriff's office has not received condition updates since Wednesday.

Lewis County Sheriff Steve Mansfield wrote in a letter Monday that the boy "did nothing to provoke the attack" but "will most likely suffer permanent physical and mental injuries for the rest of his life."

Last week, sheriff's deputies, animal control and trappers were on the scene at 148 Stubb Road in Onalaska, searching for the dogs involved in the mauling. The 14-month-old child was attacked by Blue Heeler, Labrador, and Australian Shepherd dogs while walking alone between his grandmother's and parents' houses.

The boy is "lying in a hospital bed suffering the consequences of an irresponsible animal owner and apparent lack of adult supervision," the Mansfield wrote in a letter to The Daily News.

"The owner of the dogs failed him by not containing the dogs properly, and the responsible adult who was watching him failed by allowing this young child to walk down a public road by himself, with knowledge that the dogs lived at the residence the child needed to pass by," Mansfield said.

"When my investigators spoke with witnesses and neighbors, many of them claimed that they had been having problems with the dogs, yet no one ever called the sheriff's office to report their concerns."

The boy suffered critical injuries, including multiple bites and lacerations, before he was rescued by adults and airlifted to Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma.

Brown said the owner did not live on the Stubb Road property. The name of the owner has yet to be released.

Mansfield, meanwhile, also lamented the problems with uncontrolled dogs in rural areas.

"Year to date, we have handled 728 animal-related calls, 58 of which are dog-related. We have classified five dogs as dangerous animals and 15 as potentially dangerous. Unfortunately, many people move from urban to rural areas and believe that since they are in the county their animals can roam freely. This is not true. Animals must be contained on the owner's property," Mansfield wrote.

He noted that allowing animals to roam freely is a violation of the animal ordinance and can result in an infraction of \$257.00 for each animal. Each violation increases in cost.