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Officer shoots dog, later euthanized, after attack on man

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A Billings police officer shot a dog Thursday morning after the dog attacked a 70-year-old man.

The man, Gerald Brawley, was taken to the Billings Clinic emergency room. He was listed in critical condition Thursday night.

The dog, an 11-year-old Labrador and boxer mix named Harley, was later euthanized at a Billings veterinary clinic. The brother of the dog's owner said Thursday afternoon that the family was upset at the incident and questioned whether the officer needed to shoot the family pet.

"Our dog was not aggressive," said Rick Harbaugh as he stood in a yard at 915 S. 32nd St. where the incident happened. "He was just watching our yard the way dogs do. He was protecting us."

Harbaugh said neither he nor his brother, Glen Harbaugh II, who owned the dog, was home at the time. Several people were asleep inside the house, but they did not witness the incident, he said.

The dog was shot in the cheek and the bullet lodged in the shoulder, Harbaugh said. The dog was euthanized at his brother's request, he said.

"He didn't deserve to go the way he did," Harbaugh said.

Sgt. Ross Adams said police were called about 10:44 a.m. to the house at the intersection of State Avenue and South 32nd Street. Officers were told a large dog attacked Brawley as the elderly man was walking on the sidewalk near the house. A motorist stopped to help Brawley, and the dog ran into the yard.

Harbaugh said the dog must have jumped the fence from the backyard, where the family has three other dogs.

Officers Dan Brown and Dan Walters tried to keep the dog in the yard while waiting for an animal control officer. The dog, which weighed between 50 and 70 pounds, charged at Walters, who shot the dog with a Taser, Adams said.

The Taser stopped the charge, but the dog pulled away when the Taser current ceased, Adams said. An animal control officer arrived and tried to snare the dog in a narrow strip of yard. The dog eluded the snare and again charged at Walters, who fired his pistol once at the dog when it was within a few feet, Adams said.

The dog was taken to the Moore Lane Veterinary Hospital, where it was euthanized.

Adams said the dog owner could be cited, but the incident remains under investigation.

Harbaugh said the dog had never attacked anyone before. After the dog was shot, it went back into the yard and into the house through a dog door, leaving a blood trail, he said. He said the dog may have been trying to get back into the yard after being hit with a Taser and cornered when it was shot.

"I think it's awful," he said. "I realize things happen, but our dog wasn't a criminal. He was a part of our family."

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