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Dogs attack, maul 5-year-old Mother's worst nightmare becomes a reality

By Bill Donovan
Staff writer

TWIN LAKES — It's a mother's worst nightmare — seeing a son or daughter being mauled by a pack of dogs.

Mathias Pablo, 5, was walking near his home in Twin Lakes about 6 p.m. Tuesday. He had been told not to go near the neighbor's trailer because the family kept several dogs and none of them were on a leash.

His mother, Gilda Pablo, said she had just gone outside to call Mathias to dinner when she heard one of the dogs next door barking.



Five or six dogs attacked 5-year-old Mathias Pablo Tuesday evening August, 14, 2007 at his home in Twin Lakes, NM. Pablo was attacked while going to wash up for dinner. He spent that evening in the hospital on heavy pain medications, but was sent home later that evening. [Photo by Daniel Zollinger/Independent]

She looked around but “couldn't find him anywhere.”

But she saw the neighbor's dogs, growling and tormenting something on the ground some 150 to 200 yards away near the neighbor's trailer. Then, on the bottom of the pile, she saw something — her son's shoe. And then she heard her son crying out for her.

“I began running toward the dogs and as I ran, I looked for something on the ground I could use against them,” she said later.

But there was nothing so she — along with her niece who came to her aid — began yelling and screaming at the dogs and to her surprise, the dogs ran away, giving her a chance for the first time to see her son. His clothes were torn and there was blood “everywhere.”

“He didn't want me to hold him because he couldn't breathe,” she said.

The son was immediately brought to the Gallup Indian

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Medical Center, where he was treated for numerous dog bites and a major gash to his leg. He was given morphine for the pain and later was put on Tylenol with codeine. Doctors there told the family that rabies shots would not be required since there is no real rabies threat from dogs in this area.

But this is something that shouldn't have happened, said the boy's father, Matheney Pablo, who said that there had been three incidents with the dogs in the past, one in which another small child was bitten.

When the tribal police came, they interviewed the owner of the dogs, whose name has not been released, and others in the neighborhood who said that the youngster did nothing to provoke the dogs — they just attacked.

"One of the dogs just had puppies so she may have been trying to protect them," Matheney Pablo said.

Crownpoint police said the matter is still under investigation. The incident report has not been turned in yet and Matheney Pablo said he was told that it would not be available until Tuesday.

Joe Begay, the tribal animal control official from Crownpoint, interviewed family members Friday morning and promised he would do what he could to get the animals picked up.

"It's hard for kids to get over something like this," he told Gilda Pablo.

Family members said Mathias, who once enjoyed being with dogs, is now afraid to get near them. He's now just beginning to walk outside again, his mother said, but family members make sure that as long as the dogs are around that someone is watching over him at all times.

"Whenever the dogs come toward our house, we chase them away," Gilda Pablo said.

The owners of the dogs have been away this week but were scheduled to return home late Friday. When they do come home, they will be greeted by a petition signed by several of the other area residents asking animal control officials to do something about the dogs.

Tribal dog control officials have been saying for years that more needs to be done to control the dog population on the reservation. Although there have been no deaths reported in more than a decade from dog bites, Indian Health Service officials have reported treating more than 150 bite cases on the average every year.

For right now, Matheney Pablo said, he was just grateful that

his son is all right. "It was just a good thing that she went out looking for him when she did," he said.

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