



August 1, 2007

Vicious attack kills family pet

- News
- Sports
- Letters
- Entertainment
- Editorial
- Columns
- Archives

- Classifieds
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- Privacy Policy

- Featured Links
- Bowes Publishers
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by Amy Dyck
 Wednesday August 01, 2007

Sir Digby Clam Chowder, a 20-pound sheltie, lived a happy, contented life of 14 years until the morning of July 21 when he was attacked and killed by a white husky-type dog in Davidson Creek.

"He was my baby," Darcee Tainton said, fighting to choke back the tears as she remembered her longtime companion. "Digby is a member of my family."

Tainton and Digby were walking their regular Saturday morning route down Dawson Drive when Digby was attacked by the large dog. The incident occurred near the intersection of Dawson Drive and Donnelly Terrace.

"I saw a flash of white and then a husky-type dog had already grabbed my dog," Tainton said. "I started screaming, 'Help me!'"

Several strangers heard Tainton's cry, including Shannon who brought some blankets and tried to stop the attack and a gentleman who phoned for Tainton's sister to come.

"I want them to know how grateful I was," Tainton said. "Their kindnesses will not be forgotten."

Unfortunately, however, the husky dog had already managed to pin Digby to the sidewalk by clamping his jaw around Digby's neck and then snapping it.

"He stalked the dog (Digby) like he was in the wild looking for his prey," Tainton described the surreal experience. "There was no noise -- it was very quiet -- and then he just grabbed my dog."

Tainton contacted the RCMP immediately, and then proceeded to file an official complaint with enforcement services. From charges were laid against the owner of the husky dog. According to supervisor of enforcement services Wilf Gillis, the fine for a dog attacking another dog is \$300, which was issued in this case.

According to section 8.7.2 of Dog Control Bylaw 85-2006, a heftier fine of \$1,000 and other restrictions can only be issued if the dog is deemed vicious by the chief commissioner through personal observation or on the basis of facts determined after an investigation initiated by a complaint.

Strathcona County's enforcement services defines a vicious dog as "any dog that attacks, threatens, or inflicts a serious wound upon another domestic animal or human."

Gillis explained that the case is still under investigation, and therefore, the chief commissioner has not deemed the dog vicious at this point. Interviews still need to be done with the owners of both dogs before any decision will be made. Gillis expects the investigation to be completed by the end of this week.

"Shouldn't this dog be quarantined? But it is completely up to the owners," Tainton said, exasperated with the outcome of the incident. "All they get is a ticket."

Tainton expressed that dog owners need to take better responsibility of their dogs and that residents need to be careful.

"Don't let your guard down," she said, "as at any time you could be a victim of a dog attack." Tainton no longer feels safe in her neighbourhood after Digby's attack.

"It will be awhile before I can walk down that road," she expressed sorrowfully. "The traumatic event of that early morning will never be forgotten."



Proprietor and published by Bowes Publishers Limited at 168 Kaska Road, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada T8A 4G7

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