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## Police dog is returned after it bit children

By Scott Witten - Managing editor

LUMBERTON - The Police Department has returned a canine to the company that trained him after the animal bit his handler's niece and nephew earlier this month.

City Manager Wayne Horne said the city took the action after the dog, who is called Nero, bit the 3-year-old and 10-year-old relatives of Lt. Jerome Morton on Aug. 1. Neither child was seriously injured.

According to a police report, Morton's stepson, Blake, had taken the dog out of his pen so that Nero could use the bathroom and that they could play. A few feet away, Officer Morton was talking to his sister, Clarissa Woodman, and her children, Cara and Tommy Ray, who live next door.

The report said when Nero saw Morton, the dog ran to the group and bit the 3-year-old boy and when his sister tried to run, the dog bite her as well.

The children were taken to Southeastern Regional Medical Center, where each required two to three stitches, the report said.

The report said that "even though it was an accident, Lt. Morton did not have control over the K9. When




Search

Nero is allowed to use the bathroom and move around the without a leash, Lt. Morton has to maintain control over the K9. There was no control."

Horne said Morton had called his superiors to tell them about the incident right after it happened.

"It appeared to be a minor accident," Horne said. "The injuries certainly were not life threatening and we turned it over to our insurance company to take care of the medical bills."

Horne said the dog was returned to the company that trained him. He said he was not sure if the dog would be retrained or replaced. The city has about four police dogs. Nero was trained to help detect illegal drugs.

Morton declined to comment when reached on Wednesday.

"I ain't got nothing to say about it sir," he said.

Woodman could not be reached for comment. Police Chief Mike McNeill said Morton has not been reprimanded over the incident.

"We're still looking at it," McNeill said. "The dog was trained to be aggressive and that played a part in it."

Police dogs routinely live at the homes of their handlers.

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