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January 25, 2007

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Three dogs attack GB man

BY BRADLEY "B.J." DAVIS, JR. [Gulf Breeze News bjdavis@gulfbreezenews.com](mailto:bjdavis@gulfbreezenews.com)

Three dogs viciously attacked a Gulf Breeze man while he was approaching a house to have a petition signed on Jan. 11. Deer Point resident John McDaniel required medical treatment after three dogs, two Great Danes and a German Shepherd, ripped off McDaniel's pants and clawed his upper body.

"He's pretty chewed up," said Mayor Pro Tem Clay Ford. "He had two shirts on and a nylon jacket. He said they didn't tear through the jacket, but (he showed his back by raising) the back of his shirt and he's got claw marks down his back that broke the skin."

The City of Gulf Breeze has a contract with Escambia County Animal Regulation and Control because of the agency's proximity to the city.

"At this point this city is not involved. There is an investigation proceeding through Escambia County Animal Control," Mayor Lane Gilchrist. "I understand (Animal Control) will come out with a recommendation of how it will be handled."

Animal Control Director Bruce Rova noted the severity of the situation.

"It's a dangerous dog case," he said. Although Rova was unable to comment specifically on the case since it is under investigation, he explained the procedure of how the agency handles cases such as these.

"First of all, the case goes through an investigation. There are certain Florida state parameters that both cities and unincorporated areas have to follow," Rova said. Some of the criteria include whether or not a victim was attacked on private property. In this case, according to Rova, the dogs were considered "loose." Once the investigation has commenced, witnesses are interviewed and written statements are taken. The process can take up to several weeks.

"It takes some time to get written statements. Sometimes they may open up another avenue to gather additional comments," said Rova. A pet owner has a couple of options if in the event an animal is designated a "Dangerous/Vicious Dog," which is a civil infraction. The first offense can carry a \$150 fine; the second offense is \$300 and the third is \$500.

"Sometimes the responsible party is not willing to take the liability or cost or additional licensing," said Rova. "If the dog has a propensity to attack, that would be the next step making it a criminal offense or if there is something that indicates to people that the dog is dangerous." Rova said if the owner doesn't take financial responsibility, he or she can elect to surrender custody of the animal. Unfortunately, that is the end of the line for the pet.

"If they surrender custody, we would not adopt the pet out," he said. He added the most common alternative is euthanasia.

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