



The Times

5 dogs in custody after attack

Worker recovering from wounds; may sue

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BY DEBRA FRIEDMAN

PRINCETON TOWNSHIP -- Five German shepherds that attacked a landscaper Tuesday morning have been taken into custody by Princeton's Office of Animal Control, animal control officer Mark Johnson said yesterday.

The animals, which belong to Elizabeth and Guy James, badly mauled Giovanni Rivera after he and four co-workers arrived at the James' home on Stuart Road West to work on a patio.

A sixth German shepherd owned by the Jameses did not take part in the attack and was not impounded.

Johnson said all six dogs were unlicensed and four were not vaccinated. He said the animal control office has issued three summonses to the dogs' owners for failure to license and vaccinate the animals.

Rivera, 42, of Trenton underwent three hours of surgery Tuesday afternoon to repair the damage caused by the numerous dog bites he received during the attack to his abdomen, legs, back and right arm.

He is recovering from his injuries at the University Medical Center at Princeton.

During a brief interview from his hospital room yesterday, Rivera said he was in an "incredible amount of pain."

He said his body was very sore and that he could hardly move. His pain, he said, was all over -- from his scalp to his legs. He said his body is covered with bite marks and bruises.

Doctors, he said, had hoped to discharge him yesterday but at the last minute decided to hold him for observation for at least one more day because he still had some open wounds.

The landscaper said he could not wait to go home to his family.

According to police, Rivera and the other landscapers arrived at Elizabeth and Guy James' home on Stuart Road West an hour earlier than expected Tuesday, at a time when the six German shepherds are normally allowed to roam within the fenced backyard. Rivera has claimed that his company had made prior arrangements with the homeowners to come earlier in order to make up for hours lost to rain on Monday.

The dogs allegedly charged at the landscapers, knocking down Rivera and mauling him until the homeowners were able to stop the animals and call 911. When police arrived at the scene, Rivera was covered in blood, with his pants and shirt ripped off.

Initially, Johnson said animal control officials were not planning to take the dogs away because Rivera did not wish to testify. However, as of yesterday, Rivera had agreed to talk to police and had hired an attorney to sue the owners of the dogs, he said.

As a result of the testimony, animal control has taken the dogs into custody until a June 19 hearing, at which the fate of the animals will be determined.

The dogs' owners could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Staff writer Rose Colon contributed to this report.

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