



## German shepherd attacks woman, grandchildren

By **MISTY MAYNARD**

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DOVER -- A woman and her two grandchildren were injured after their family pet broke its chain in the backyard and attacked them Thursday.

According to Mason County Deputy Mike Rigdon, the sheriff's office received a call around 12:15 p.m., concerning a disturbance. Rigdon responded to a location on Lee's Creek Road in Dover where a 96-pound German shepherd had attacked a 51-year-old woman and her two 4-year-old grandchildren.

Rigdon said the adult victim, whose name is being withheld until completion of Rigdon's official report, advised him the dog attacked the 4-year-old girl for no apparent reason while she played in the backyard. The dog had been restrained by a chain, but apparently broke the chain.

When the young girl was attacked, the woman attempted to intervene and the dog bit her numerous times as she tried to ward the dog off. During the attack, the 4-year-old boy was also bitten.

Rigdon said the three individuals were able to make it into a car sitting outside the residence to get away from the dog.

The woman had been on the phone with her sister when the attack first started. When the dog attacked, she dropped the phone. Rigdon said the sister apparently heard the commotion and drove from her residence to the location of the dog attack. When she arrived, Rigdon said the sister observed the dog circling the car, attempting to get inside the car.

From there, Rigdon said the sister drove to nearby Ranger Steel for assistance. Two men, identified as Josh Vice of Maysville and Jason Smoot of Flemingsburg, followed the woman to the location.

Rigdon said once there, the men observed the dog still circling the car. When they realized the individuals inside the car were injured, they shot the dog with a firearm one man had in his possession.

An employee at Ranger Steel called the Mason County Sheriff's Office to report the incident, Rigdon said. When he arrived, the dog had been killed.

Two of the victims were taken to Meadowview Regional Medical Center by ambulance, while the third was transported to the hospital by a family member.

Rigdon said the grandmother received numerous bites on both legs. The girl received two or three large bits to her left hip and leg, while the boy received one large bite to his leg and a scratch on his back, Rigdon said. None of the bites appeared to be life-threatening, Rigdon said.

"It was a vicious attack," he said.

Rigdon commended the woman, as well as her sister, Vice and Smoot for their quick action. He said their response essentially saved the two children's lives.

"(They) did a stellar job protecting the children," he said.

The German shepherd had apparently never demonstrated any violent tendencies prior to the attack, Rigdon said. Additionally, Rigdon was told by the adult victim the children had been playing in the backyard and had not been provoking the dog before the attack occurred.

Rigdon said the woman had owned the dog for about a year and a half. She had received it from another family member.

The body of the dog was transported to Colonial Heights Veterinary Clinic.

According to Dr. J.T. Williams, the veterinarian at the clinic, the dog will be tested for rabies at a laboratory in another city. To do that, Williams said the lab will examine a portion of the dog's brain for the virus. Additionally, the lab will inoculate a mouse with part of the tissue as a confirmatory test to see if rabies was present in the dog.

In the case of the German shepherd, Williams said it may not be possible to complete the test because the dog was shot in the head. Depending on the line of travel, the bullet could have destroyed the part of the brain necessary for the testing.

Williams said cases of rabies in Kentucky are "very rare." In a report he viewed recently, as few as four to six cases had been reported in a year's time. Incidences of rabies in Kentucky occur most frequently in skunks, bats and occasionally, foxes, Williams said. Other animals typically at a higher risk are livestock such as horses and cattle, which may be out in the field during the night when wild animals are out.

If the dog had rabies, it could have been harboring the virus for up to six months, Williams said. According to Williams, it takes that long for a dog with the virus to become infectious. Once the dog becomes infectious, it would die within 10 days times.

Williams said the rabies vaccine is the only required vaccine for dogs, and recently became required for cats and ferrets. Williams said he did not know the German shepherd's vaccination history.

Other conditions which could have potentially incited the attack, Williams said included cognitive dysfunction, or a brain or spinal infection.

Cognitive dysfunction, Williams said is possible in an older dog. However, typically the changes in behavior are more along the lines of disorientation.

Additionally, Williams said a dog may attack in response to pain, if it associates that pain with a person in the area. However, he said in those cases the response is usually not as severe as in the case of the German shepherd attack. An animal which has been restrained for a long period of time may also suddenly snap in some situations, Williams said.

Williams said in the circumstances as he is aware of them, those responding to the scene did the right thing in shooting the dog.

Williams said the results of the rabies test could come back as early as today.

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