

Wairarapa Times-Age



Masterton dog-owners Moirea and Ross Sutherland with their seven-year-old Belgian barge cross dog Chum.

Savage attack by dogs sparks fears for kids

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A near fatal dog attack on a Masterton family pet has sparked fears that a child or older person may be next.

Ross Sutherland said he was walking their family dog Chum, a seven-year-old Belgian Barge cross, along a new public walkway alongside the Waipoua River near Colombo Road on Tuesday.

It was about 6pm, he said, and Chum was off his lead and making his way through long grass at the edge of the walkway when "three dogs came out of nowhere and hit him".

"I couldn't believe the speed they arrived at," he said.

"They were obviously pig dogs because the first one was a finder and the second two were holders. The last one there was huge, a Bullmastiff I think. He did most of the damage.

"I reckon if it was ten seconds more, they would have killed him."

Mr Sutherland said he kicked the larger dog several times and managed to rescue Chum from the attack with the help of the other dogs' owner, who had appeared on the scene.

Chum was bleeding heavily from puncture wounds and lacerations to his hindquarters, Mr Sutherland said, and went into shock before he was rushed to an emergency vet.

The other dog owner seemed upset at the incident and had sprayed Chum with an antiseptic spray retrieved from the same nearby vehicle to which he returned his animals, he said.

"While I was wrapping Chum in my shirt, the guy disappeared. I would really like to speak with him again and talk about the \$500 vet bill we were left with, although it's not just about the money.

"What really scares me is that this was a public place and there are dogs like that roaming around. If it was a small child or an older person, they could have been very seriously injured or worse."

Chum was yesterday active and barking for the first time since the attack and drainage tubes would be removed from his hind leg early next week. Infection is now the greatest risk, he said.

"I won't be walking back there again and I know that if I had Chum on a lead it would never have happened. People should be aware that their dogs have to be kept on a lead, including ours, and that some dogs like that pack should never roaming free in a public area in the town."

Mr Sutherland said he had reported the incident to police and was still on the look out for the other dog owner.

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