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Puppy, owner attacked by greyhound

Pint-sized puppy hurt in own yard

By JULIE HORBAL, SUN MEDIA

Kirsten Spokes and her husband Sean were counting on a puppy to help their new house feel more like home.

Now they're counting on area pet owners to take some responsibility before they can truly feel comfortable.

Just a week after the couple moved into their newly-renovated house in the Fort Garry area, their pint-sized puppy Mason -- a bichon frise-Shih Tzu cross -- was attacked by another dog in their own front yard.

"I'm very wary of all animals now. I'm frightened to take Mason in the front yard," Kirsten said yesterday, nearly 24 hours after prying her puppy out of the jaws of a neighbour's large dog.

Kirsten Spokes, 29, had the five-pound puppy in her yard Sunday afternoon when an adolescent girl walked up with three full-grown "rescued" greyhounds.

"The black one went for him, picked him up by his belly and crunched down," she said. "I had to jump on top of the dog and pry its mouth open, and Mason just dropped to the ground."

As the tiny dog fell, the greyhound chomped on Kirsten's hand, leaving two "pretty big scratches" and some bruises.

But Spokes said her dog was her main concern after the incident.

"Mason was just screaming when we went to pick him up," she said. "I don't know how else to say it, but he was freaking out."

LONG RECOVERY

An immediate trip to the vet ruled out any internal damage. In the two days since the attack, the "happy and playful" dog has slowly begun to welcome human contact again, said Spokes.

The tiny pup suffered a severe break in his front-left paw and now faces a long recovery, including expensive surgery to reconstruct the metacarpal bones in his digits.

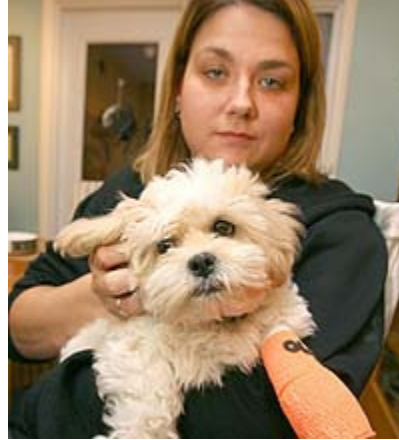
Spokes said she was told it will cost \$1,000 just to see a surgical specialist later this week.

"I feel I shouldn't be held responsible for that bill," she said.

With the help of some of their new neighbours, Spokes and her husband tracked down the dog's owner -- an elderly disabled woman who was being helped out by her granddaughter, Spokes said.

Sean has spoken with the woman's health care worker but not the owner.

An animal control officer told Kirsten the owner would be visited today to talk about the former race



Kirsten Spokes holds her bichon frise-Shih Tzu cross Mason that was attacked by a greyhound near Spokes' home on Riley Crescent in Fort Garry on Sun., Oct. 7, 2007. (Sun Media)

dog's future.

"I thought greyhounds were wimpy dogs," Kirsten said. "But Mason is a small, white, fluffy dog. Maybe the dog went back to its racing roots and thought (Mason) was its bunny to chase."

Though Spokes doesn't necessarily fault the girl who was walking the dogs, she said pet owners should take responsibility to prevent such incidents -- or at least fix them.