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Terrifying attack by vicious but legal dog

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By Claire McNeilly

An Ulster man who was badly bitten by a large dog spoke last night of his fears during the frenzied attack and said that even legally owned animals can be dangerous.

Housing officer Jim Allison was walking his puppy near his home at Stockman's Lane in south Belfast around 9.30am on Sunday when he was savaged by a Japanese Akita fighting dog.

The 48-year-old suffered severe bites to both arms that required stitches, as he sought to protect his small Yorkie, Scruffy, from the ferocious animal.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph last night, Mr Allison said that if it hadn't been for a neighbour, his injuries could have been much worse.

"I saw a Japanese Akita fighting dog coming towards us," he said.

"It weighed about eight stone. It went for my throat. I put up my left arm to protect myself. Meanwhile, I was holding the puppy on its lead off the ground with the other arm.

"It tried to reach down and get the puppy, but somehow I managed to get into a neighbour's garden. Just as the dog was coming over the gate a man opened the door. I jumped in and slumped to the floor. I thought my arm was broken."

Mr Allison said that a passing motorist, who witnessed the attack and stopped his car, was unable to help because the dog then made a lunge at him while he was in the vehicle.

"He couldn't get out," explained Mr Allison.

"But at least that gave me a few seconds to get to the house - and to safety."

He added: "It had already done a lot of damage. My upper right arm was ripped open and I damaged a muscle and had puncture wounds beneath the arm."

Mr Allison, who practises martial arts, said that this type of incident underlined the dangers that certain dogs posed.

"If that dog had attacked one of my nephews he would have been dead," he said.

"I think people should be aware of what these dogs can do and I think owners need to take more responsibility for their dogs."

A PSNI spokesperson confirmed that officers and ambulance personnel arrived at the scene shortly after the attack.

USPCA official David Wilson - who removed the dog from the area and took it to kennels run by the organisation in Carryduff - said that this is just the latest in a number of similar attacks.

"An Akita is not a dangerous dog in terms of the law, but it requires an owner who is aware of its needs," he added.

"They are not like American pit bull terriers, but they are big dogs that need careful, responsible handling."

The Akita - bred for hunting bear and deer in Japanese forests - is not a banned breed in Northern Ireland.

Five months ago, in April, a 73-year-old Carrickfergus man was walking two Yorkshire Terriers when he was set upon by an Akita.

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