

National Story

Laughs turn to screams as dog bites party girl

5:00AM Thursday September 06, 2007

An investigation is under way after a 10-year-old girl was bitten by a dog at a friend's birthday party on Saturday.

Kaylee Bird was enjoying Singstar with her friends when she was bitten above the eye by a Jack Russell terrier.

Her mother, Erryn Brown, said she rushed to the house when Kaylee rang her, an hour after the incident.

"I could see where the dog's teeth had gone in and she was distraught," she said.

"I was thinking all sorts of things on my way there. She could have lost her sight."

The pair went to the accident and emergency department at the hospital and, after an hour-long wait Kaylee got a stitch in her eyelid.

Ms Brown did not blame the dog for the incident but had laid a complaint with Tauranga City Council.

"I just want people to know and realise they are animals," she said. "You can love them to death but they need to be treated like animals. They're animals and animals need to have boundaries."

The owner of the dog refused to comment but there are differing accounts of what happened leading up to the attack.

Council animal services manager John Payne said any complaint would result in an investigation, usually taking two to three days. It would sometimes depend on the willingness of those involved to talk.

All reports were taken seriously but bites on the face had the potential to disfigure, he said.

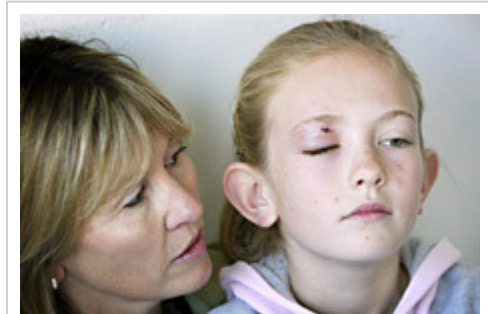
In Kaylee's case it did not matter what had happened leading up to the bite, he said. "The bottom line is the dog has bitten her face and that's not good."

Mr Payne said the investigation was close to completion.

Staff would then make a recommendation, ranging from taking no action through to a prosecution with a destruction order attached.

Other actions could include issuing an infringement notice, or for the dog to be declared menacing or dangerous.

"It doesn't default to legal action. It's about what's the best thing in the interests of the community? And can we arm the owner with some knowledge? We have a lot to offer in terms of knowledge and education." Mr Payne said face bites often resulted from direct eye contact with a dog.



Kaylee Bird, 10, pictured with her mother Erryn Brown. Photo / Bay of Plenty Times

Dog attacks

Baby girl mauled

Gifts ease pain for girl mauled by dog

"Even with your own dogs we discourage that. Dogs can see it as a threat or a challenge." He cautioned people to ask an owner's permission before they approached a dog and should not treat a dog like a toy or child.

"Don't cuddle them around the neck and especially don't kiss them."

Any dog can bite, regardless of its age or familiarity with people.

"It's a dog. It's an animal and should be treated as such."

-Bay of Plenty Times

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