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Thursday, 21st August 2008

Aunt issues warning after Akita attack



Abbygale Horsfield and her injuries



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THE aunt of a two-year-old girl who was attacked by a pet dog has spoken of her regret at the incident and urged people to be wary of feeding such animals near young children.

The *Mail* reported on Thursday that little Abbygale Horsfield suffered puncture wounds to her head and neck and had her ear ripped in three places when she was attacked by her aunt's partner's Japanese Akita, Scooter.



By

Abbygale's dad, Matthew Horsfield, of Raby Road, Hartlepool, said he was

waiting to hear what the dog's owner plans to do with the animal before deciding whether to take it further with the police.

Today, Stephanie Horsfield, Matthew's sister and partner of Glenn Miller, the then-owner of Scooter, said she regretted that her young niece had been hurt.

Stephanie spoke out as Jo Lee, a dog behaviourist from Hartlepool, issued advice to pet owners about having dogs around children.

Stephanie, 17, of Keswick Road, Peterlee, said: "Abbygale was just sitting there, stroking him and she must have got too close to his face and he turned round and snapped his jaws.

"It was just a quick snap and he has never done anything like this before. I obviously regret it and hope Abbygale's okay."

Stephanie, who is looking for work, said the dog has since been taken on by Glenn's friend as a security guard dog.

She added: "I would advise people not to feed Akitas around children. Scooter was chewing on a chew toy near Abbygale when he snapped."

Jo Lee, a dog behaviourist and trainer who runs K9 Kapers from her home in Lennox Walk, Hartlepool, said patience was a must between supervising adults, children and dogs.

She added: "No matter how old the child is they have to be taught how to be around dogs and animals in general, from a very early age. All dogs are different personalities, some will tolerate children pulling, nipping, hanging around their necks, but its not to say they like it."

Jo advised pet owners with children to get a dog above the age of two that had been neutered.

She said advice is available in free leaflets from the Dogs Trust and Blue Cross, as well as on her courses.

"We invite dogs into our world, it's up to us to help them adapt to our expectations, not to leave it to God a providence and blame them when it all goes so wrong," she added.

Page 1 of 1

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