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Dog attacked in Beach Grove

Animal shelter looking for information

Jessica Kerr, The Delta Optimist

Published: Saturday, August 30, 2008

Delta's animal shelter is hoping someone will come forward with information after a dog was attacked in Tsawwassen earlier this month.

Colleen Leggatt says her husband was walking their Meryl Sheltie, Blue, at around 7:30 a.m. on Aug. 17.

After a walk along the dike in the Beach Grove area, he let the dog off its leash in a more treed area. Blue was just out of his sight for a moment when he heard the dog squealing. He ran around the corner to find a tan coloured bull mastiff-type dog on top of Blue.

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Leggatt said that it was just a second or two later that the other dog owner caught up with his dog. She says he claimed that his dog thought the Leggatt's dog had its ball.

The Leggatt's thought Blue was uninjured after the attack because he wasn't bleeding. However, the following night she noticed a large black hole in the dog's side.

They took Blue to the vet and were told that he had an infection and required surgery to stop it from spreading.

Leggatt said her husband had never seen the man or the dog in the area before and did not get any information from him before they left the area that morning.

Nick Henze, a senior animal control officer with the Delta Community Animal Shelter, is hoping someone will come forward with information that will help them track down the dog and its owner.

He added that animal control has stepped up its patrols of the area in hopes of finding the owner.

"Whenever we get a dog bite complaint... we find out who owns the dog...," he said.

Animal control officers will generally investigate the incident to see if the animal has a history of such behaviour.

He said officers will determine if the canine may need to be designated as a dangerous dog.

In Delta, dogs that are designated as dangerous, require a special licence. They must be muzzled and leashed when outside of the home, and they must be restrained in a particular manner if they are being kept in a yard.

All dogs in Delta have to be on-leash when they are being walked, although Delta council did instruct civic staff last year to look into the possibility of creating off-leash areas. While some dog owners supported the idea, other residents voiced opposition.

Saying they've looked into what's in place in other municipalities, parks and recreation director Ken Kuntz said in an earlier interview with the Optimist that there are pros and cons to any system that allows dogs off-leash.

Kuntz said they are still gathering data and a report on the options will be presented at the next parks and recreation commission meeting.

A report containing recommendations for council will be completed in the next few months.

"The challenge here is that all the research we've done shows that it's got a whole bunch of multifacets to it, and at the end of the day you don't please everyone. Part of us is actually leaning toward saying what we have is working fine. We'll see what happens in the fall," Kuntz said.

The municipality experimented with three off-leash areas a few years ago, but the initiative fizzled due to the unpopularity of the locations.

"At the end of the day, we just want to make sure that it doesn't happen again," Henze said.

Anyone with information about the identity of the dogs involved in the attack is asked to call the Delta Community Animal Shelter at 604-940-7111.

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