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NEWS

Dog apprehended after alleged attack

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A stray mix-breed dog has been apprehended by Upson County Animal Control after an alleged attack on a toddler Monday, August 25.

Natalie Owinger, a stay-at-home mother of three and part-time Upson County 911 operator, claims her youngest daughter was overcome by a stray dog at their Bradley Drive residence and nearly injured Monday evening.

According to Owinger, the dog had been abandoned on her street a week prior. She says that she contacted Upson County Animal Control after first sighting the animal the week before, and after explaining the situation to the officer, was told how animal control would handle it.

"[The officer] told me she would get someone out here either that evening or the next morning," says Owinger, "and I said 'ok'."

Two days passed, and after additional attempts to contact animal control, the dog had still not been apprehended according to Owinger.

Owinger says that she contacted animal control (which is closed on weekends) again on Monday and was told by an officer that "the truck is broken down and they'd get to it as soon as they could."

Owinger states that after being assured that the animal would be removed no later than Monday, an animal control officer then called to inform her it would be Tuesday instead. She goes on to explain that not long after her last conversation with animal control, the alleged attack occurred.

"The kids and I went outside to clean up the yard and the dog was still lingering around," Owinger starts. "He started jumping around in a playful way, but then started getting more aggressive with the kids."

She continues:

"He bit my middle daughter on the back of the ankle but didn't break the skin. Then he gets my youngest daughter down and it's just like she's a rag doll; he was all over her, but I was right there. I yanked her up, kicked the dog, and went in the house to call the deputy [sheriff]."

According to Owinger, the deputy arrived at her home shortly after followed by animal control officers Phillip Hill and Christi Stephenson. According to Stephenson, they had been summoned by the sheriff's office.

The dog was taken into custody by animal control officers and transported to the Upson County Animal



Nine year old, Imani Web, is seen here with the nine-month-old abandoned puppy alleged to have attacked a two year girl on Bradley Drive in north Thomaston. Imani is the daughter of Animal Control Manager, Smart Web. According to the manager, the dog had a very pleasant disposition with everyone there, including his little girl.

Shelter.

Animal Control Manager Smart Web's account of the events were somewhat different.

"We were never told the dog was aggressive," says Web. He told The Thomaston Times that had he been informed of the dog's alleged aggressive nature, steps would've been taken to expedite the apprehension of the animal.

"If we (animal control) are informed of an aggressive or potentially rabid animal, we are required by law to make that animal's capture priority over all others. That was not the case here."

According to animal control officers, there were other legitimate reasons as to why the apprehension was delayed.

"We were down one truck," explained ACO Stephenson. "One of the trucks we use to collect animals was broken down, and we were relying on just the one other truck to take care of everything we have to do each day."

In addition, the animal control officers were also involved in court for the latter part of last week, according to Web.

"The bottom line is, this dog doesn't seem to be aggressive," says Web, "and if she (Owinger) thought it was, she didn't tell us. Since we've had him [at the shelter] he's shown no signs of aggression or rabid behavior."

No report was filed with the Sheriff's office regarding the alleged attack, and no serious injuries were sustained by the 22-month-old.

"Luckily," according to Owinger, "the little marks that the dog left up and down [my daughter's] arms and legs are going away. Thankfully her skin wasn't broken either."

According to Owinger, her main plight is, had animal control officers responded to the first call and collected the animal in a more timely manner, the alleged attack could have been prevented.

Because the incident has been labeled an 'animal attack,' the dog will be euthanized by Upson County Animal Control following a standard, ten-day quarantine period to determine the animal's rabies status.

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