



Dog attack raises concern

Lafayette plans more warning signs at Great Bark Dog Park

By John Aguilar
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LAFAYETTE -- Shiloh, a 10-pound Pomeranian Maltese Shih Tzu mix, bears the scars of a wicked attack.

Across his shaved back is a 4-inch gash sewn back together with stitches. A pair of tubes extends from both sides of the injured area to allow toxins to weep out.

"He has puncture wounds that go through several layers of tissue," said Amie Seiberlich, who regularly takes Shiloh and her two other dogs to Lafayette's Great Bark Dog Park.

On Sunday, she said, a greyhound turned mean at the park and nearly killed Shiloh. The little dog was spared more severe injury by a Good Samaritan who draped himself over the animal to protect it.

Seiberlich and her partner Barbara-Jean Slopey, who have shelled out \$800 in vet bills so far, said they'd like Lafayette to become more proactive in curbing bad behavior by dogs and their owners.

"If I had my druthers, dog owners using the park would have to take the dogs through a 'good citizen' course to ensure some level of standard behavior," Seiberlich said. "You get a bunch of dogs together off leash and they revert to their pack mentality. Things can go wrong in a split second."

She plans to put together a task force on dog park safety next month.

Alexandra Lynch, a spokeswoman for Lafayette, said Sunday's incident is the first report of a dog attack at the Great Bark Dog Park the city has received since the 6-acre facility opened on the eastern edge of town, at 597 N. 119th St., in April.

In reviewing the incident, she said, Lafayette Parks & Open Space officials decided Wednesday to place new signs at the park reminding people that it's against the law to own a vicious animal and bring that animal to the park.

The signs are set to go up before the end of the week.

But Lynch said there isn't anything else the city can do specifically to the greyhound's owner until that person is identified.

And she said it's not practical for the city to police the park to ensure that dog owners have the proper off-leash training.

But Jen Berkes, whose American Staffordshire Terrier was attacked by a dog a quarter his size at a Longmont dog park four years ago, said cities should consider beefing up code enforcement at dog parks.

She said there are far too many irresponsible dog owners who frequent the parks.

"We have one lady who shows up wasted all the time," Berkes said. "It would be great if they had someone patrolling, somebody who has the authority."

Seiberlich said if money is the issue, Lafayette might consider supporting the creation of a team of citizen-volunteers to keep an eye on the park and the dog owners who use it.

She said she'd be first in line to donate her time.

For now, Seiberlich is trying to determine who owns the greyhound that attacked Shiloh. She wasn't at the park during Sunday's attack, instead leaving her dogs in the care of a friend. She filed a police report on the incident Wednesday.

"Right now, there's nothing," Seiberlich said. "Anybody can take their dog, let them loose and take no responsibility for it."

She acknowledged that Lafayette's dog park has a separate enclosure for smaller dogs, but she said Shiloh was attacked on the way out of the park and that small dogs shouldn't have to be hustled under lock and key out of the dog park for fear of being mauled.

"Our only choice right now is to stop going," she said.

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