

Little dog recovering from brutal attack (9:40 p.m.)

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FAIRHAVEN — On a sultry summer Sunday, Claudia Martin and Sweetie, her 9-pound foxy-poo, were playing on her private beach when suddenly their fun turned to horror. A powerful bull mastiff charged onto the beach and bit down on Sweetie in a vicious attack that nearly killed her, Ms. Martin said.

Now recovering in a full-body “Teenage Mutant Ninja”-style cast, Sweetie — a globe-trotting magazine model — is lucky to be alive after \$10,000 in veterinary care.

But Ms. Martin said she still gets chills when she thinks about how close she came to losing her “soul mate” as she walked along the beach near her home at 17 Turner Ave. on June 29.

“She was playing in the water with me and I was throwing her seashells when this bull mastiff came onto the beach, took one look at my dog and ran immediately for her. Then my dog looked back at me like she was saying ‘Oh no’ and ran for her life.”

The mastiff lunged at Sweetie — a 5-year-old cross between a poodle and a fox terrier — shaking it in its mouth and “ripping it apart like a rag doll,” Ms. Martin said. The mastiff’s owner, Don Cordeira of Acushnet, attempted to stop the attack by jumping on his dog and prying open its mouth, she said. When the mastiff let go, Ms. Martin scooped up Sweetie, then the mastiff lunged at her, she said. She ran through her neighborhood screaming for help. A neighbor rushed her and the dog to Mass-RI Veterinary ER in Swansea as she held Sweetie and prayed.

“Her lungs were popped out on my chest. She blew up like a balloon. She was bleeding to death all over me,” she said.

Sweetie entered the emergency room with a weak pulse, punctured lungs and a fractured rib. And just moments into her examination, Sweetie stopped breathing, Dr. Michelle Lampe said in a report. Doctors immediately put the dog on a ventilator and gave her fluids to bring up her blood pressure, Dr. Lampe said.

“They’re miracle workers at that hospital,” Ms. Martin said. “I had no money or license on me and they just took my dog without knowing who I was.”

Sweetie returned home earlier this week, where she is recovering in a “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” cast supplied by the veterinarian while spending most of the day in a crate.

Ms. Martin works out of California as an interior designer but spends her summers in Fairhaven. She grew up in Southeastern Massachusetts, she said. Sweetie, her “assistant,” travels with her everywhere, and has made appearances in about 550 magazines for which she has done modeling work.

Ms. Martin filed a report with Fairhaven police and the Animal Control Department and said she will request at the selectmen’s meeting Monday that Mr. Cordeira’s mastiff be put down because “it is a menace to society.”

Gali, the mastiff, was quarantined for 10 days in Acushnet, and Mr. Cordeira vowed to never bring the dog back to Fairhaven, according to Tiffany Tripp, the town’s animal control officer.

Mr. Cordeira said he thought the beach was public and disputed Ms. Martin’s contention that “no trespassing” signs are displayed on her property.

“I’ve been sick to my stomach since it happened. It’s like a nightmare that won’t end,” Mr. Cordeira said.

Ms. Martin said she has had signs clearly displayed on her property for years marking it as private.

Mr. Cordeira was visiting his girlfriend at 5 Morey Lane the day of the attack. He said he feels terrible about what happened, but would have kept his dog on its leash had he noticed anyone else was around.

“My dog is the friendliest dog in the world with people, but when it comes to animals, she attacks,” he

said.

Several neighbors have since come forward with their own complaints about Mr. Cordeira's dog attacking their animals, Ms. Tripp said in her report.

Ms. Martin said she doesn't want what happened to Sweetie to happen to anyone else. She said she also wants to start a foundation for people who cannot afford to pay their animals' medical bills.

"She's named Sweetie for a reason — she's just the sweetest little animal," Ms. Martin said.

"My dog means the world to me. She means everything. And I would spare no expenses to spare her life."

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