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Dog bites worker at VIC; owner leaves her wondering if it had its rabies shots

By NATHAN BROWN, Enterprise Staff Writer

Posted on: Monday, March 17, 2008

SARANAC LAKE — When a dog bites someone, it's not usually a front-page news story. But when it occurs on a public trail, and when the dog's owner flees, leaving the victim wondering whether or not the dog had its rabies shots, there's more of a public interest.

Camille Burns, a naturalist at the Visitor Interpretive Center in Paul Smiths, was snowshoeing the VIC's Tamarack trail around 3:45 p.m. Sunday when she saw a large brown dog in the distance approaching her. The dog's owner, a man on skis in his late 40s, was farther behind.

"The dog was off leash, and it was quite a ways ahead of its owner," Burns said. "The dog was running. I stepped off the trail because I thought the dog was going to pass me. It slowed down as it approached me. It growled, and then it lunged at me. It bit me on my right leg."

Burns guessed the dog was a chocolate Labrador mix, or a Chesapeake. It had a square jaw, and its ears hung down. The owner was on red skis, and from the way he was skiing, Burns could tell he was experienced.

"The owner approached me," Burns said. "I said, 'Your dog bit me.' He asked where, and I told him it was on my leg. I showed him a tear in my pants."

Burns asked him for a name, and he said "Bill Walsh." The owner then started to ski away, and the dog took off, running ahead of him.

"I interrupted him," Burns said. "I said I was in a lot of pain, and I told him he needed to come back to the building."

The man apologized for his dog, and started skiing toward the building, telling Burns he would meet her there. He never showed up, and eventually Burns went out into the woods with some of her colleagues to follow the dog's tracks.

"We were able to track the dog to Keese Mills Road, to a point where it looked like there was a vehicle parked," Burns said. "The state police have been notified."

Burns went to the hospital afterward.

"He broke skin, but it's a surface bite," Burns said. "I didn't need stitches, but my



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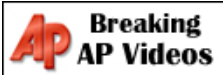
skin is torn, and it was bleeding.”

Burns said she is not interested in pressing charges; she just wants to see the dog’s immunization records to know if it has been vaccinated for rabies. If she doesn’t know by Wednesday, she will have to get herself vaccinated, a process of six painful shots over the course of a month.

“All I want to know is if the dog had its rabies vaccination,” Burns said. “That’s my main concern. I’m not looking to press charges, I don’t want to arrest the guy. I just want to know if his dog has been vaccinated, because it’s a nasty vaccination and I don’t want to receive it.”

The owner, or anyone else with any information, can either call the VIC at 327-3000 or Burns at 593-0148.

Contact Nathan Brown at 891-2600 ext. 26 or nbrown@adirondackdailyenterprise.com.



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Letter to the Editor: "Did the dog have its rabies shots?"

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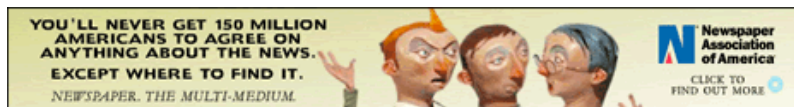
To the owner of the dog that bit me:

While you were skiing at the VIC in Paul Smiths on Sunday, March 16, at about 3:40 p.m. your big brown dog bit me and broke the skin. You said you would meet me at the building, but you never showed up.

I now have two options: receive a month-long series of painful rabies shots OR obtain proof of your dog’s rabies vaccination. All I am asking from you is proof your dog has been vaccinated for rabies. Please do the right thing. This is extremely time sensitive. Please contact me as soon as possible at 518-593-0148.

Camille Burns

Saranac Lake



Adirondack Daily Enterprise

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