

The Martha's Vineyard Times

Banned dog kills in Oak Bluffs

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Tisbury selectmen last month banned Storm, a Siberian husky, from their town for killing chickens on multiple occasions. On Saturday Storm escaped from his temporary home in Oak Bluffs and killed again.

The dog killed at least 15 chickens on one farm property and attacked cows and horses on another.

Storm is owned by Ken and Nina Garde of Tisbury. The couple's dogs, including Storm, have been the source of multiple complaints in Tisbury.

Saturday Oak Bluffs animal control officer Heather Jaglowski responded to a call at 7 pm from long-time Island farmer Elisha Smith. Mr. Smith's farm is located on Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road in Oak Bluffs. Mr. Smith reported that two dogs had killed some of his chickens and were running loose in the area, said Lt. Timothy Williamson of the Oak Bluffs Police.

According to Ms. Jaglowski's report, she arrived at Mr. Smith's farm at around 7:15 pm to find six chickens killed and several injured. She subsequently found two Siberian huskies running loose at an adjacent farm where there were cows and horses.

The older dog wore a tag identifying him as "Storm Garde." Ms. Jaglowski contacted Rebecca Garde, who confirmed the younger dog, Mussa, belonged to her, and that Storm belonged to her parents, Ken and Nina Garde.

The younger Garde said a former boyfriend was caring for the dogs, and that they escaped because one of his roommates left a sliding door open. Both dogs have been impounded in Oak Bluffs for a 10-day quarantine period, Lt. Williamson said.

"Obviously we are not going to make this a dog circus," Oak Bluffs Police Chief Erik Blake said in a phone call yesterday.

Ms. Jaglowski will participate in a vicious dog hearing regarding both Storm and Mussa before the Oak Bluffs board of selectmen on Tuesday, Sept. 9, Chief Blake explained. "Her job will be to present the selectmen with a couple of options, one of which is called a permanent restraining order on the dog, with the owners required to put up a bond, and the second option is to have the dog euthanized," he said.

Ms. Jaglowski will compile reports from Tisbury regarding the dogs for the hearing, as well. "I think the dog owner had the responsibility to do a couple of things that weren't followed through on, and the selectmen will be presented with that history - it will be their job to make a decision," Chief Blake said.

When the selectmen vote to euthanize a dog, the owner can appeal the selectmen's decision after 10 days, Chief Blake said.

In a follow-up call on Tuesday Mr. Smith said several chickens died since Saturday night, bringing the total killed to 15. He said another five or six might not survive, due to serious injuries.

Mr. Smith said many of the hens that were killed were older ones that roam the farm. The younger ones are kept in a pen.

A tenant staying on Mr. Smith's property chased the dogs off by shooting at them with a pellet gun. Mr. Smith said Mr. Garde called him and offered to pay for the damages.

When asked about the birds' value, Mr. Smith said he bought about 100 pullets a few months ago, at a cost of \$12 apiece. In estimating the damages, Mr. Smith said he also has to figure in loss of revenue from eggs, which he sells at \$4 a dozen. Although he usually gets 35 to 40 eggs a day from his hens, the chickens laid only about 10 eggs the day after the attack and have been fearful about coming out of the hen house, Mr. Smith said.

What is now an Oak Bluffs problem was Tisbury's problem last month. Following numerous complaints, on June 3 Tisbury selectmen placed a six-month restraining order on Storm.

Storm was caught running loose twice in violation of the order and on August 12 selectmen voted to ban the dog from town as of September 1.

On August 15, Storm ran away and killed chickens on a property on Chase Road, where he had killed before. Mussa accompanied him.

Tisbury animal control officer Laurie Clements caught and impounded both dogs. On August 19, Mr. Garde, who is chairman of the town's board of health and a board of public works commissioner, met with the Tisbury selectmen and asked for permission to take Storm off-Island on Aug. 21 for evaluation for adoption at a husky rescue organization in Connecticut.

Mr. Garde was allowed to remove Storm from the pound after submitting a letter dated August 21 to the selectmen in which he stated, "I'm being allowed today to pick up our dog Storm. I agree to transport [him] out of town as you have ordered, not to return to Tisbury."

His daughter paid fines and boarding fees in Tisbury and took Mussa home. Tisbury selectmen intend to hold a dog hearing regarding Mussa at a later date.

On Tuesday morning, Mr. Garde stopped at The Times office and delivered a written statement from his wife.

In discussing the latest incident Mr. Garde said he and his wife took Storm off Island as promised on August 21, heading to Connecticut to attend his mother-in-law's memorial service. When they contacted the husky rescue organization, they were told there were no foster families available and that there was no facility to temporarily house Storm while he was waiting to be adopted.

He said they spent an extra two days in Connecticut, trying to find an alternative solution, only to return to the Island with Storm on Aug. 26.

In her statement, Ms. Garde wrote, "At that point all we could think to do was dock in O.B. and put him in the care of a young man who knew the dog, was good at handling him, and had a home in O.B., as he [Storm] was banned only from Tisbury. This was to be temporary, until this week when we were going to place him with a friend in New Bedford, where there is no livestock, until a proper Husky foster family could be found. Again human error allowed Storm to escape."

"We are very, very sorry for the attack on and loss of chickens and humiliated before this community by these events," Ms. Garde wrote. "We have lived here for 33 years and have watched while in the last ten years every bit of land has been built upon, making it very hard to coexist peacefully with one another."

The letter continued, "We are not irresponsible pet owners, we plan to sell our property and move where we will have room to breathe and own pets, but this could not happen soon enough to prevent tragedy."

When asked why they had chosen a dog not suited to urban life, Mr. Garde said his wife received Storm, a nine-week-old puppy, from their son Caleb as a Mother's Day gift a year ago. The couple has owned about 15 or 16 dogs over the years, and Storm has been his wife's favorite, Mr. Garde said.

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