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Dog who bit girl in Glyndon euthanized

A Glyndon, Minn., miniature pinscher that sparked two police investigations in the past month was euthanized Thursday.

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A Glyndon, Minn., miniature pinscher that sparked two police investigations in the past month was euthanized Thursday.

Police deemed the dog dangerous and informed its owners of a number of steps they must take to keep the animal under Minnesota statutes.

"The owners signed a release today, and the dog was euthanized," Glyndon Police Chief Mike Cline said Thursday.

The dog, named Homer, had sent two children to the hospital in the past few weeks, most recently 4-year-old Destiny Sheerin of Moorhead, who underwent plastic surgery last week to repair a tear to her lower lip. Residents of the Glyndon trailer court where Homer lived say the dog had previously bitten two other children who went to pet the animal, leashed on its owners' yard.

Minnesota statutes say a dangerous dog is one that inflicts substantial bodily harm without provocation, either on public or private property. To keep a dog after it's declared dangerous, owners must ensure it's properly enclosed at all times, take out insurance worth \$300,000, pay an annual fee of up to \$500 and have a microchip implanted in the dog.

The dog's owners, who were traveling out of state when Sheerin was bit, said Thursday that the family made a difficult decision to let the dog go after finding out they'd have a hard time buying insurance for it.

"I do feel bad for what happened," Elizabeth Guevara said, "but they're making us seem like we don't care."

She said Homer was a good dog.

"We just don't know what happened," said Guevara, who said her daughter, Shannon, 11, owned the dog. Shannon and Guevara's younger children, ages 4 and 5 months, used to play with Homer without incident, Guevara said. She added that she was only aware of the two incidents reported to police.

She said Homer would run away sometimes, but until recently hadn't bit anybody. The family brought him into their trailer every night.

The police also forwarded reports to the Clay County and Glyndon city attorney offices, but Cline said he did not expect criminal charges because the dog was on its owners' yard when the incidents occurred.

"The dog was on its own property, so there really wasn't a crime committed," said Glyndon City Attorney Ken Norman, adding, "Whether or not there's a civil issue, it's up to the civil courts to decide."

Kyle Kemmet, assistant Clay County attorney, said he didn't anticipate criminal charges in the case.

Sheerin's parents insist their daughter was bit on an empty property adjacent to the dog owners' yard, where the dog could wander off on its leash. Trailer court residents call that property a vacant lot; Cline counters it's a yard that's been unoccupied for at least 10 years and that the dog's owners and their neighbors kept up.

Guevara said her family had permission to use the lot next door because they had long kept it up: "We had permission to have Homer exactly where he was from the landlords."

Amanda Lancaster, Sheerin's mom, said she and her husband are still considering legal action against the owners and the trailer court managers who, residents say, ignored complaints about the dog.

"I am just glad this dog is not going to hurt any more children," she said. She said Sheerin will need to have a second surgery next month.

Meanwhile, Moorhead City Councilman Greg Lemke brought up a Saturday Forum story about the biting incidents during a Monday Moorhead City Council meeting as he pitched an ordinance limiting the time a dog can be chained up outside. Lemke also presented research showing dogs tend to become more aggressive when they spend long stretches of time chained outdoors.

On Thursday, he said Homer's case might strengthen the argument for the proposed ordinance. But he said he regretted the plight of the dog: "You can't blame the dog. Dogs don't train themselves. It's the people."

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