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## Child still in critical condition after dog mauling in Sylva

By Josh Mitchell • Staff Writer

A 7-year-old Jackson County boy is fighting for his life after being mauled by a dog last week, according to Jackson County Sheriff Jimmy Ashe.

Dalton Mathis is listed in critical condition in the Intensive Care Unit at Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville.

"Hopefully he'll heal very soon," said Ashe.

Mathis suffered severe injuries to his neck, face and head in the attack last week, said Ashe. He has gone through one surgery already. The parents were not at home during the attack.

Mathis' 11-year-old sister witnessed the attack and called 911 on a cell phone after unsuccessfully trying to get the dog off by striking it with a belt, Ashe said. The boy was airlifted to Mission Memorial Hospital in Asheville. It is unclear how long the dog attacked the child, Ashe said.

Jackson County animal control officers shot the dog to protect themselves against its aggressive behavior. The dog's remains were sent to a lab in Chapel Hill for analysis to determine if it had diseases such as rabies, but the results weren't back as of press time Tuesday.

Ashe said the dog appeared to be a mix of a chow and a St. Bernard between 80-100 pounds. The dog was owned by Carolyn Higdon who lived at the residence but is unrelated to Mathis, Ashe said.

Ashe said the boy had just arrived home from school when the attack occurred. There were three children under the age of 11 and a disabled 22-year-old at home at the time, said Ashe. No one has been charged in the incident that remains under investigation by the sheriff's office and the Department of Social Services.

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