

# THE DAILY TIMES

FARMINGTON NEW MEXICO

## San Juan County toddler attacked by dog in day care

By James Monteleone The Daily Times

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FARMINGTON — A 2-year-old boy received nearly 150 stitches after being bitten by a dog Tuesday at a home day care facility, the Sheriff's Office said.

The toddler, R.J. Sanders, was released Wednesday from San Juan Regional Medical Center, family members said.

The dog bite occurred around 5 p.m. Tuesday at the Kids Kountry day care on County Road 5793 after the child apparently startled the Akita-breed dog while playing with a toy near the animal, Undersheriff Mark McCloskey said.

"This dog snapped. I've got pictures of what my grandbaby looks like now (that) he's got over 100 stitches in his little, bitty cheek," said Joann Jackson, the child's grandmother. "This dog bit my grandson more than one time."

Day care operator Coleen Rivas will not be charged with any crime because the dog has no history of aggression, the undersheriff said.

The 8-year-old dog will be euthanized by animal control at Rivas' request following a 10-day quarantine period, which is required after any dog bite, the Sheriff's Office said.

"If the dog had had a history of viciousness, we would be handling it in a different manner," McCloskey said. "As far as we can tell, this is an isolated incident and the owner is taking what we feel is the appropriate action in having the dog

destroyed."

The attack was a surprise and the dog previously was very gentle with the six children cared for at the home, said Rivas, who operates the Children, Youth and Families Department-licensed day care center out of her home.

"They'd hug him, they'd pet him. One girl kisses him," Rivas said. "He was big because of the breed of dog he is, but he was not anything the kids feared."

After the attack, law enforcement officers and parents were alerted to the incident, Rivas said. Children returned to the home day care center Wednesday.

"Our prayers are with R.J. and his family," she said.

An investigation of the dog attack will be conducted by CYFD to ensure the day care facility is a safe one, department spokeswoman Romaine Cerna said.

"Anytime we have a child in one of our licensed facilities and that child is injured, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the injury, we are going to be concerned and we are going to conduct an investigation," Cerna said. "Our interest is not the prosecution of the case, our interest is that children are in a safe child care setting."

According to CYFD, Rivas' day care center, licensed since June 2008, has received a single complaint, alleging the home was understaffed for the number of children there one day last month.

That complaint was upheld by CYFD, but Cerna could not confirm what corrective action was taken.

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