



Curs gone wild

Rez dogs attack elderly woman, man



Dogs are seen rumaging through garbage at Basha's in Chinle in 2004. The reservation has been plagued for decades by packs of dogs that form packs, look for food, procreate extensively, and attack humans. Sometimes they are owned by families who don't keep them fenced or on a leash. Courtesy photo

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By Gaye Brown de Alvarez
Staff writer

WINDOW ROCK — It's been a problem for decades. Dogs on the reservation form packs and become hungry and vicious. They attack livestock, pets and humans. And they're not always wild dogs. Many times they belong to someone who just doesn't care for them or feed them.

Olin Arviso, program manager of the Navajo Nation Animal Control Department, said on Jan. 11 a woman in her 60s was walking near her home in St. Michaels to her neighbor's residence when seven medium-sized dogs, all owned by one family, attacked her and badly injured her.

Arviso would not give her name, as the incident was "still being investigated," and he was not sure the extent of her injuries, "but they were pretty bad." The seven dogs all belonged to one family in the area. They were picked up, tested negative for rabies and euthanized.

Then, the next day, Jan. 12, a Lukachukai man in his 60s was attacked by four dogs. He was injured and went to the Chinle hospital, Arviso said. He was mostly bitten in the legs, not as bad as the woman, but still he was injured and required hospitalization. Those dogs also tested negative for rabies and were euthanized.

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The Navajo Nation has animal control laws referring to nuisance animals, restraint of animals and vicious animals. No animals, except domestic house cats, are allowed to run at large, unless the animals are restrained by a leash not to exceed 6 feet in length.

The owner of any dog which bites a person in public place or on the property of the owner of the dog shall be liable for damages suffered by the person bitten regardless of the former viciousness of the dog or the owner's knowledge of its viciousness.

The penalties for safety provision violations run from \$50 to \$200.

There are five animal shelters on the reservation, and there are officers at each shelter. The Eastern Agency animal shelter is in Crownpoint, the Northern Agency animal shelter is in Shiprock, the Fort Defiance animal shelter is in Fort Defiance, the Chinle Agency animal shelter is in Many Farms and the Western Agency animal shelter is in Tuba City.

On Feb. 12 the Navajo Nation Personnel office will advertise online for two entry level animal control officers.

"Right now we have seven permanent and three temporary officers," Arviso said. "I need more staff. At one time there used to be 16 officers here."

Money is tight, Arviso agreed, but he hopes things get better. People should remember to spay and neuter their pets. The Navajo Nation Veterinary Livestock Program offers spay/neutering.

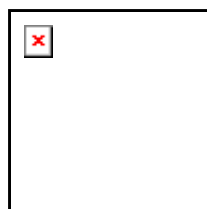
People with animal problems can call the Many Farms facility at (928) 781-4380, Shiprock (505)-368-1235; Fort Defiance (928) 729-4023 or (928) 729-4239; Tuba City (928) 283-3089; Crownpoint 786-2382.

Information: www.nndpm.navajo.org

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