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Dog guilty of violent mauling given 'dangerous' label

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The Neapolitan mastiff that bit three-year-old Austin Demeter has been labelled a "dangerous dog" by the City of Chilliwack after an investigation into the June 29 incident.

But what this designation means for the future of the dog is uncertain, as he was brought by the owner to Washington State.

"Although the city was unaware of it, through investigation we were advised that the dog had bitten at least once before, which should have made the dog owner aware of the dog's propensity, tendency or disposition to bite a person," Chilliwack Animal Control officer Lisa Thompson said in a statement issued Friday.

Austin required 96 stitches to close the wound caused by the large dog that brutally mauled him in the kitchen of his aunt's house on Bonny Avenue. After the dog attack, Kelly Thorburn, the aunt and the owner of the dog, fled with the dog, eventually bringing him to the co-owner of the show dog in Spanaway, Wash. Austin's dad Drew is glad the dog has been labelled dangerous, but he wonders if it means anything.

"Up here, but that doesn't mean anything down there," he told the Times Friday. "But if she sticks to her word . . . she said if the dog was deemed dangerous he would be put down." Drew still is amazed at how much effort Thorburn put into protecting the dog, yet almost five weeks after the incident she hadn't contacted her sister to see how Austin is.

"She is going about her life like it never happened," Drew said. "She is still dog grooming in a place in Langley." A call to T.J.'s Pet Grooming in Langley confirmed Thorburn worked there, was at the location on Friday, but she did not return the Times' call before going to press.

After the incident in June, Thorburn sent out a statement that said, in part: "Due to underlying family dynamics, it is my belief that putting the dog down would not bring a satisfactory enough conclusion to this matter for my sister and her husband."

The statement from Thompson said that she can now make an application to the Provincial Court of British Columbia to have the dog destroyed.

"If the dog is ever returned to Canada, in the interest of public safety and in anticipation of the possible return of the dog to British Columbia, the City of Chilliwack may proceed with that application," she said.

As for little Austin, Drew said he is doing much better, but he has a nasty scar that is still very sensitive. He has to be completely kept out of the sun to avoid damaging the healing tissue. And he is terrified of big dogs.

"He saw a big dog and wanted up," Drew said. "He said 'big dogs, big teeth, bite me.'"

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