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Dog bite a pain for teen

Posted 45 mins ago

An afternoon jog along Barrie's lakeshore turned ugly for a Barrie teen earlier this week when his leg was bitten by a dog.

Karen Shipley said her 18-year-old son, Andrew, was bitten by a local man's dog while running near Minet's Point Drive on Wednesday afternoon.

"My son was jogging along the lakeshore and there was a man with two dogs on the path. He was stopped with them," Karen said yesterday. "When Andrew went by them, he said the one black dog jumped up and took a big chunk out of the back of his one leg.

"He's OK and the actual wound will heal, but you can still see the teeth marks on his leg," the Barrie mom added.

Andrew said the dog's bite was definitely worse than its bark.

"I think the guy had stopped to tie his shoe, and both his dogs looked nice enough," he said. "I jogged up on the grass to give them space, but then the dog just jumped and bit me. I didn't expect that and I said, 'Hey, your dog just bit me and holy crap it hurts.'"

Andrew said he asked for the man's name and address, but the man was unwilling to give him the information. He said the man did drive him to a nearby restaurant to tend to his wound, and then drove him to his Shaina Court home.

"The man actually gave Andrew money to replace his shorts, because when the dog bit him, it also tore his jogging shorts all up," Karen said.

A licence plate was not obtained, but Andrew told police the man drove a large, black Chevrolet Impala-style car.

Karen said Barrie police were contacted, as well as the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, who are both looking into the case.

"The police came and took Andrew around the area where it happened and looked for the man and his dogs," Karen said. "They weren't able to find the man that day."

She said what she and her son really want is to find the dog and be sure it doesn't have rabies. She wants her son to get rabies shots right away.

"I guess it's better to be safe than sorry," Andrew said. "I just want to know if that dog has any diseases that I could have got."

Health unit officials wouldn't speak specifically about Shipley's case, but said there's a strict protocol that the unit's rabies department will follow during a dog bit complaint.

"There are specific steps we take and we do our best to see that humans involved with dog attacks don't get rabies," said Tony Makrostergios, the health unit's acting rabies co-ordinator.

"If the animal is available, it will be quarantined for a 10-day period. It's basically put under house arrest, but can still venture into a fenced backyard for exercise."

Makrostergios said the human victim will likely need rabies shots. But, in some cases, he said people are encouraged to wait a week before being vaccinated.

"If the animal is rabid when it bites you, it will usually die within seven days, or at least start showing obvious symptoms of rabies," he said. "If the dog is alive and well in 10 days, you are free and clear of having rabies. I can tell you that's the case 100 per cent of the time.

"But, it will also depend on the bite. If it's a facial bite, we'll normally start the person on the rabies vaccine immediately, because rabies affects the brain and your face is so close to it."

Officials at the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) in Barrie say they don't take any action regarding dog bites unless asked to.

"The only way we get involved is if the health unit asks us to," said Melissa Bainbridge, spokeswoman for Barrie OSPCA. "The dog would have to be quarantined, and if the owner didn't have a home with a fenced yard, we'd quarantine the dog here. But that's the only involvement we would have."

Bainbridge said a dog that bites will only be put down if there's a history of biting and even then, cases vary.

The Shipleys say they don't want the dog put down, but they do want the man to come forward and own up to what happened.

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