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Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Dog shot, killed by deputy after attacks

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County Editor

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A dog was shot and killed in Lees Creek Friday afternoon by a sheriff's deputy after the dog bit a student and attempted to attack several adults, children and the deputy from the Clinton County Sheriff's Office.

Sgt. Robert Gates of the sheriff's office said Deputy Brian Noah was called to Lees Creek to investigate a report of a vicious dog running loose. The dog was a brown and white beagle.

"From the time I stepped out of my car, the dog lunged at me in an aggressive manner, showing its teeth and growling at me," Noah said in his report. "The dog circled around me several times and continued to lunge at me."

The owner of the dog, Teresa Sharp, of 77 College St., Lees Creek, arrived at the scene before the dog was shot, according to the sheriff's office. Sharp said the dog got loose and she had been chasing it, but could not catch it, Noah said.

"I pulled my taser and told the owner she needed to gain control of her dog," Noah said.

Sharp said she could not get control of the dog, according to Noah.

In his investigation of the shooting, Gates said Joseph Leslie was confronted by a dog matching the description of the dog that was killed. Leslie said the dog acted as if it was about to attack him, his wife, their two grandchildren and a friend of the grandchildren. According to Gates, Joseph said the dog showed its teeth, growled and the hair on its back was raised up. "Mr. Joseph had to fend off the dog by swinging his crutch and yelling at it while his family reached the safety of their car," Gates said.

Jerry Davis, a coach at East Clinton, told Noah a 16-year-old foreign exchange student had been bitten by a brown and white beagle. Gates said Davis reported the student had a bleeding wound to his leg and a hole in his pants.

"Mr. Davis had also spoken to coach Larry Woods who had observed the beagle when it charged him and his sons near the baseball fields," Gates said. "Mr. Woods challenged it with a baseball bat, which scared it off."

Gates said a nearby resident, Zachary Cherryholmes, who witnessed the shooting, said the dog had been a problem for the neighborhood in the past and had attacked him approximately five minutes prior to the dog being shot.

The dog apparently damaged Cherryholmes' pants when it tried to bite his leg, Gates said.

Danny DeLawder, Clinton County dog warden, responded to the scene to investigate the complaints concerning the dog.

"Deputies at the sheriff's office don't go around shooting dogs — any animals — unless it is absolutely necessary," Clinton County Sheriff Ralph D. Fizer Jr. said Monday afternoon. "That's our policy. In this case it was absolutely necessary. We'd rather do anything than shoot someone's animal. In this case, the deputy had no choice."