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Dogs Attack Columbia Shoppers

COLUMBIA - Two dogs escaped from their fenced yard off of Nifong Boulevard in Columbia on Wednesday morning.

By noon, they had already made their way to the Walmart parking lot off of Grindstone Parkway, where they proceeded to attack customers.

Bystanders attempted to defend themselves and others from the dogs, while warning others to stay inside their cars or inside the store. A few of those good samaritans sustained minor injuries. One man, Mark Adamson, spent over four hours in the hospital to tend to a leg wound that needed stitches.

Tony Caputa witnessed the attacks in the Walmart parking lot and got in his car to follow the dogs over to the Kohl's parking lot. He said that he wanted to warn shoppers in the Kohl's lot about the dogs before it was too late. When he arrived in the parking lot, police officers were already there attempting to seize the dogs along with Animal Control.

Caputa said the owner, 18 year old Dakota Crites, and a friend were also in the parking lot at that point and was trying to talk the officers out of hurting the dogs.

"They were yelling at the officers saying that the dog was just trying to play with them or anything like that but the dog had attacked a couple people in Walmart's parking lot, so I don't think that was the case," said Caputa.

One of the dogs turned on the officer and started charging at him in a violent manner. Columbia Police Sergeant Chris Kelley said the officer the dog was charging at had no choice but to shoot the dog down in order to avoid a violent attack. The police department is not willing to release the name of the officer who fired at the dog until the case is internally reviewed by a professional standards unit.

Caputa said the shooting could not be avoided.

"You could tell when he backed off the first time that he didn't want to shoot the dog, but he ended up having to do that," said Caputa.

The other dog ran away from the scene after hearing the gun shots and Animal Control was not able to capture it. Columbia resident Vernon Niles said he is Crite's neighbor. He spent all day looking for the other dog and finally found him around 6 PM. He said he took the dog to the Humane Society and Animal Control will decide the fate of the dog on Thursday morning.

Reported by: Megan Freeman

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