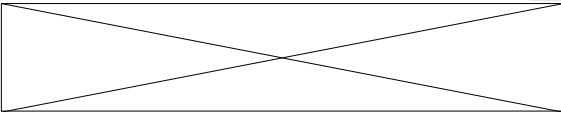




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Dog attacks

By Bridie Byrne

3rd November 2009 11:05:31 AM



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Traumatic ... Katrina, 9, suffered horrific injuries after the family's dog mauled her. 38346 Picture: SARAH MATRAY

A TARNEIT family has spoken of their horror after a vicious dog attack left their young daughter disfigured.

Katrina Cowell suffered facial injuries last week as she was bitten multiple times by the family dog.

The nine-year-old was eating breakfast when the Alaskan Malamute wanted to devour her food.

She tried to push the dog away, when her companion turned on her.

Katrina's screams echoed through the house causing her parents Mark and Tanya to rush to her aid.

Mark said she was taken to the Royal Children's Hospital where she underwent cosmetic surgery to mend her split lip, nose and cheek.

It will take at least one year before the scars heal completely.

Mark said the incident should serve as a warning to other families.

"I bought the dog at a pet shop a year ago- a big mistake," he said.

"We didn't know the breed and didn't research.

"Unfortunately we didn't get a placid dog, we got one that was a dominant."

He said there were warning signs, as the animal was prone to growling.

"It could not have gone to a better home, it wasn't left for hours on end bored," Mark said.

"If you understand how dogs think, you can never trust a dog 100 per cent."

The dog was put down, on advice there was no guarantee it would not attack again.

A spate of violent dog assaults have come to the fore over the last month across Melbourne.

In Wyndham there were 92 attacks in 2008/09 with 30 against people and 62 on animals.

The municipality has 27 dogs declared as dangerous including 26 guard and one attack trained dog and 30 of a restricted breed.

RSPCA spokesman Tim Pilgrim said the amount would be a lot higher, because many were not registered.

The State Government has proposed legislation that would allow councils the power to destroy unregistered and dangerous dogs, with no right of appeal for owners.

Mr Pilgrim said the law needed to have strict guidelines against all breeds.

"It has to ensure that everybody takes control of their dogs, whether they are dangerous or not," he said.

"The enforcement of local laws does need to be tighter and needs to be properly enforced."

Mayor Shane Bourke said the council would wait to view the details of the legislation before taking a position.

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