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### Aggressive dogs bring terror, heartbreak

Posted: Monday, Nov 2nd, 2009  
 BY: Mari Muzzi

For one Pinedale family, cuddling with their little black Pomeranian is suddenly a memory of the past.

Darby Davis and her two children worry their beloved dog Pooki won't survive her injuries from an unexpected attack by a Labrador.

The nearly 13-year-old family dog that normally rested on someone's lap now spends its days hiding under a bed and trembling.

"I keep replaying the images in my head," Davis said, as she explained how a black Labrador nearly killed the family's little dog.

What began as a typical day on Oct. 22 turned into what most dog lovers would consider a nightmare.

That day Davis decided to bring Pooki to work with her. The two walked to her car parked on Pine Street not far from her office, near the Wind River Brewing Company.

Davis said it was about 4 p.m., and suddenly the Labrador jumped from a truck parked at the Brewery and charged Pooki.

The assault happened so rapidly, Davis said, she didn't have time to respond until the larger dog had her Pomeranian in its jaws.

"He just grabbed her by the back of her neck and shook her like a rag doll," Davis said, explaining she had to punch the bigger dog several times and force it to release Pooki.

The damages have cost Davis a little over \$200 and that could rise depending on the outcome of Pooki's X-rays.

For the Davis family, the situation might become one where no amount of money can fix their little dog.

"She cries through the night. She just whimpers," Davis said. "The reality of

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someone being irresponsible could probably mean..."

Her voice trailed off; she can't manage to say the word.

Despite Pooki's furry coat shielding her against puncture wounds, the bites caused damage to her spine.

Davis is still waiting further X-ray results to discover just how badly her Pomeranian's back is injured.

"The thing is, Pooki is too old - back surgery would be almost useless," she said, explaining her veterinarian doesn't believe a dog of Pooki's age could recover from a back operation.

The family remains hopeful regardless of Pooki's limping and crying at night.

"It's just not fair that she has to hurt like this," Davis said. "I'm angry because Pooki's life has been affected. She was healthy and happy and a twist of fate changed everything."

The Labrador's owner will attend court in November and Davis has to submit the vet bills to Pinedale Animal Control Officer Julie Early.

#### Attacking dogs

Early has received three "aggressive dogs" complaints in Pinedale for the month of October.

"That's a little much," Early said, explaining the number seems high for Pinedale's population.

There have been 37 reported dog attacks in the county this year, according to the Sublette County Sheriff's Office.

Early said when a dog bites a person or another animal, the fine in Pinedale is \$200. The dog owner then goes to court.

If probation is determined then the dog cannot be out in public places without a leash and muzzle.

It's common to see dogs in the backs of pickup trucks throughout the county. However, Early explained, this can be a problem with dogs that are overly territorial.

She said there is nothing less pleasant for passers-by in a parking lot than to suddenly have a dog lunging at them from the back of a truck.

"If you know your dog is going to act (in this nature) and is mean or has a tendency to be very protective over your pickup, you need to put it inside your truck while you're in the store," she said.

Residents also encounter aggressive dogs at public parks.

Pinedale resident Paul Rock said his dachshund was attacked at Boyd Skinner Park.

He managed to save his little dog from the teeth of a St. Bernard by using a stick.

Now he carries a cane and bear spray while walking in parks and at the CCC ponds.

Rock isn't the only person with a tale of a troublesome dog attack.

Pinedale resident Jane Johnston said she was terrified while walking at the CCC ponds bike path and is still working up the nerve to return to the area.

According to Johnston, she, her

12-year-old yellow Lab and some friends were walking on the bike path when two Canaan dogs - a herding breed - attacked her dog.

"They came roaring down the bike path and they just took my dog," she said. "I was

screaming and yelling and running back (toward my dog) and they got off her and ran off."

The Canaan dogs' owner was nowhere in sight, she said.

Her dog received some surface wounds from the attack and Johnston wrote a letter to the dogs' owner about the situation but is still waiting to hear from him.

Canaan owner Bill Bellis of Pinedale said he wasn't there to witness the attack on Johnston's dog but believes it's possible because one of his dogs can be aggressive toward other dogs.

The herding and guarding-bred Canaan dog is described as highly territorial, docile with its family yet reserved and aloof with strangers, according to the American Kennel Club.

Bellis is working to rid his dog of its anxiety toward other dogs with help from a trainer in Jackson.

"We are currently working with this one dog and we've made great progress with her socialization," he said. "Both dogs are very friendly with people, but the one was a little aggressive if a dog growled at her or barked at her. We've overcome that for the most part."

It's not uncommon to see dogs without leashes at the CCC ponds and Bellis doesn't feel enforcing leash requirements is necessary.

"That's ridiculous; people want to take their dogs to the CCC ponds to exercise," he said. "They need a lot of area to run."

*For the complete article see the 11-03-2009 issue.*

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