

Waiting and hoping: Young dog bite victim seeks help

Finding the dog may prevent the need for rabies treatment

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MARCO ISLAND — Avery Krauss, 11, was bitten by a dog the morning of Sept. 26 at Mackle Park and he said he was OK at the time — but when it comes to the rabies inoculations required if he doesn't find out if the dog had the vaccine — he said he's not so fine.

"I don't want to cause any trouble," Avery's mom, Florence Krauss, stresses as the two returned to Marco's Mackle Park Thursday evening to see if any information could be found about the dog and its owners.

The difficulty in finding the dog and its owner, at least in-part, she says, is that at Avery's young age, knowledge of canine breeds aren't helping to narrow down the search.

Mom and son are relatively certain the dog was a German shepherd, but not 100 percent, they say. Avery said the dog had a large nose, likely with brown and black hair and was about to his hip in height, so likely more than 45 pounds.

Avery initially described the couple who had been walking the dog at about 9 a.m. that Saturday morning as in their 30s. However, upon more questioning, he thinks they may have been older than that and possibly in their 40s or 50s. He believes the woman had shoulder length hair and wasn't able to describe the man.

"It was so fast. There wasn't exactly a lot of time to look," Avery said.

The park was full of people of all ages at the time as a track meet was being held between several schools. First, all the girls had run by and then came all the boys, including, Avery, who was toward the end of the line of middle school students running the two-mile cross country stretch. Because he was toward the end of the line, no one saw what happened.

"I was jogging ... The dog was all scared from all the kids running past it ... It was

quick, pretty good bite though," Avery says, recalling the event.

"You can just imagine this dog," said Florence, moving her head left to right "vroom, vroom," mimicking the action of dozens of kids running by the dog one after the other.

Avery was jogging around the back edge of Mackle Park's lake, when the leashed dog lunged at him and bit the left side of his hip, near his pelvis.

"Knowing me, when they asked if I was OK, I said I'm fine because that's what I say when people ask ... It's just a habit," said Avery.

However neither he nor the adult couple checked to see if he was bleeding or if the bite punctured the skin.

It was reasonable, his mom explained, that he didn't pull his pants down to check in front of strangers and a biting dog.

"I think he did well by moving on," she added.

Avery finished his lap and went to Marco Island Charter Middle School's Principal George Abounader.

They then went to find Avery's parents, who were accompanied by a friend of the family that urged they take a look at the wound.

All decided it was significant enough to warrant a look by paramedics, who happened to be at the park for another incident, Florence added.

Park personnel called the police. However, by that time, the couple with the dog were no where to be found.

Avery's parents took him to the hospital and he has since visited the Collier County Health Department and his physician — all who suggested that Florence either find out if the dog was vaccinated or give Avery a long process of rabies inoculations beginning Tuesday.

Florence said she wants to reassure the owners that it's safe to come forward.

"I wouldn't sue. I'm not that kind of person," Florence said.

She added that they have a family dog and she understands dogs' behavior.

If it was the first time the dog bit anyone and the dog has a rabies vaccine, the dog and owners may not face any fines or fees, reported Collier County Domestic Animal Services authorities.

If the dog doesn't have a rabies vaccine, the animal will have to be quarantined with a vet or DAS for 10 days.

While the Krauss family hopes they can prevent Avery from suffering through a day in the emergency room to ensure he doesn't react to the first of four rabies inoculations Tuesday, authorities say they also hope the situation serves as a reminder to dog owners.

"People just need to be considerate and know their dog's behavior," said Mindy Matusiak, Mackle Park's recreation program supervisor.

Matusiak said before the cross country meet, she had walked around the pathway to clear it for the runners.

She says the addition of the fenced dog runs coming to the park in December should help as dogs and their owners will have their own area.

Florence Krauss said she was taken aback by people commenting on her son's situation as a warning about the dog park, Canine Cove, which is currently being constructed.

She said being from Isles of Capri she didn't even know about the dog park.

"People took this as a political thing and I'm like come on, just help me find the dog," Krauss said.

Police Chief Thom Carr said he thinks the dog park can be a great thing for the community, which has been looking forward to it, but he cautioned people as well. "There is also a need for responsible owners," Carr said.

Call the Marco Island Police Department if you have information that could help Avery at 394-5000 or Collier County Domestic Animal Services 252-7387.



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