

Bull mastiff crossbreed that bit two men had history of attacks on dogs

By BRITTON BROUN - The Dominion Post Last updated 10:17 23/01/2010

A 60kg bull mastiff crossbreed that mauled two men and a dog at a Wellington school had attacked other dogs in the past.

The animal was put down yesterday after it attacked a labrador-cross dog and the man out walking it at Rongotai College sports field on Thursday morning.

Former All White Stu Jacobs, who was teaching children to play football on the field, was bitten on his leg, arm and hand when he stepped in to help separate the fighting dogs. The labrador's owner was also bitten.

Wellington City Council is still considering prosecuting the owner, but Mr Jacobs said he had to be punished.

"Animal control officers spoke to him and he had no understanding of how much damage the dog's done. He just took his dog away without speaking to any of us . . . he's a coward really."

Council spokesman Richard MacLean said the male mastiff-cross had been involved in a fight with another dog at the same fields last year. There had also been another incident involving the dog.

The bull mastiff-cross was registered, though not micro-chipped or neutered. Its owner, whose property backs on to the Rongotai College fields, would not comment yesterday.

In the man's backyard was a large dog kennel, with the name "Lucky" written above the door.

Les Dalton, president of the New Zealand Institute of Animal Control Officers, said the number of dog attacks had decreased in the past two years.

Those that did attack tended to be unregistered and were often not neutered, he said.

"The bull mastiff cross [involved in the Wellington attack] may have been protecting its territory and bit people in the confusion. It may never have attacked a person in its life."

Separating fighting dogs was highly risky and people, including dog controllers, tended to get bitten.

But Dominion Bullmastiff Club spokeswoman Sharron Mischefski defended pure breed bull mastiffs as "gentle giants". They were often confused with pit bulls but were not by nature aggressive, she said.

Council statistics show dogs attacked 60 people and 63 animals in the capital during the dog registration year to June last year.

In that period, 98 dogs were destroyed.