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Dog attack wound takes 35 stitches to close

Clay Today | January 26, 2010 | 8 Comments

Clay Today staff

ORANGE PARK – An Orange Park woman attacked by two dogs Saturday, Jan. 23, continues to be traumatized by the incident in the Harbor Island subdivision, her daughter says.

"She will wake up screaming, reliving it all," said Barbara Ham, whose mother, Carole Munyon Honsinger, had to receive 35 stitches in her arm as a result of attack in the 1400 block of Starboard Court.

The dogs' owner says she feels terrible about the attack and may not retrieve them from Clay County Animal Care and Control, which had just returned the two 18-month-old purebred Boxers after they were involved in another attack about four weeks ago.

"I don't know what I should do," said Janie Oliver, the Boxers' owner. "They are like part of the family but I never want them to hurt anyone again."

Honsinger, 64, of Pirates Cove Lane was walking her dog Duke, a shitzu, and had her 8-year-old granddaughter with her about 6 p.m. when two Boxer-breed dogs attacked them. According to a Clay County Sheriff's Office incident report, the dogs knocked Honsinger to the ground and began biting her as they attempted to fight her dog.

Neighbors who heard Honsinger's screams for help came to her aid, causing the dogs to run off, the report says. Harbor Island residents Christopher Stuhlman, 22, and Jeffrey Cavanaugh, 30, were in their garages when they heard Honsinger, ran to the scene and chased away the dogs, the report says.

Honsinger's granddaughter, who was on a scooter, was not injured. A passerby put her in a car so that the dogs couldn't get to her, Ham said.

The dogs attacked again moments later at the corner of Starboard Court and Harbor Island Drive as Laura Vidak was walking her two dogs. Vidak and a neighbor who helped fight off the dogs, Robert Shulenburg, received minor bite wounds as well. Vidak had a small puncture on her left middle finger and Shulenburg received a scratch or bite mark on his right arm, the report says.

The dogs are in the custody of Clay County Animal Care and Control, agency Director Gail Flakes said Monday. A neighbor let them into the backyard of the owner's property on Starboard Court but an animal control officer later went to the home and retrieved them, she said.

Flakes confirmed the dogs also were involved in a separate bite incident prior to Saturday's attack and were recently returned to Oliver after a 10-day quarantine period. Reached Monday on her day off, Flakes said she did not have immediate access to records concerning the other incident.

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"We have to gather all the pertinent information and then make a determination on whether they are declared fierce. This is a normal procedure in these types of cases," Flakes said.

If declared fierce, CCAC could require the owner to take actions ranging from ordering the owner to the dogs under constant human control to erecting more effective barriers to keep the animals penned. Flakes said those decisions will be made after meeting with her staff.

Oliver will also be required to pay "reclaim fees" before the dogs are released. Flakes said the fee amount can vary depending on several factors.

"Some owners decide they don't want to pay the reclaim the fees," Flakes said. "I haven't talked to (the owner) yet so I have no idea what their feelings are."

The boxers' owner, Janie Oliver, blamed the animals escape in the most recent incident on a friend of a woman who is dog sitting for her. Oliver said the friend couldn't get inside the home, so we went to a back gate and didn't latch it well.

Oliver, a registered nurse who was working when the attack happened, said she feels terrible about the incident.

"I am really a good dog owner and I feel bad for the people involved. I wasn't there. I wish I could have avoided it and I am sorry that it did," she said. "My heart goes out to this woman."

The 1 ½ year-old pure bred Boxers, a male and female, have lived with her family since they were puppies. She said her teenage daughter has held parties at the home with many children there and never had a problem with the dogs.

At times they do get aggressive with her other dog, a Chihuahua. "They try to nip at her and she nips back at them," Oliver said.

Describing herself as a single mother working three jobs, Oliver said she often walks the dogs late at night when she gets home from her third job. Accusations that the dogs are not properly cared for or are ignored are not true, she said.

She acknowledged the dogs also were involved in a previous incident. In that case another resident's dog was bitten when contractors working on her house accidentally let the animals get out, Oliver said.

"I paid that person's vet bills," Oliver said. "She came to me with the vet bill and I paid it. It was \$113."

Honsinger, who was taken by ambulance to Orange Park Medical Center for treatment, is taking pain and anxiety medications as she recuperates, Ham said.

"The injuries are very severe," Ham said. "She lost a tremendous amount of blood."

Rate Dog attack wound takes 35 stitches to close

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