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Neighbors seeking protection from dog

By JULIANNE TAYLOR
Tribune staff writer
Thursday, September 01, 2005

Thanks to neighbors speaking out, a dog terrorizing the neighborhood may soon not be on the prowl.

The black labrador mix male dog, known as Auggie, has been in quarantine at the Humane Society since Aug. 24, when it bit Rusty Jett.

The attack sent Jett to the hospital, where he received several staples in his right arm.

The dog will be released Friday, if its owner, Nancy Lowe, pays the fee for boarding the animal, said Billy Bryant, chief animal control officer.

"Unless someone takes the owner to court and the court orders the animal be put down and left in quarantine, there's nothing I can do," Bryant said. "This isn't the first time this animal has been in quarantine. It seems to bite people."

Neighbors speak out

Several neighbors, including Carol Brown, Jett, James Wright and Paula Meyers, voiced their concerns about the dog at the Kokomo Common Council meeting Monday.

Carol Brown, who owns the apartment building next door to Lowe's residence, said she was concerned about the dog and the safety of her tenants.

"This dog has been biting since 2001," Brown said. "We don't know what we do. It isn't that we don't like Nancy, we don't like her dog. We just don't



BITE WOUNDS: Rusty shows the wounds he received after a neighborhood dog bit. The injury required six staples. (KT photo by Markov)

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want that dog back in our neighborhood. We don't feel safe when the dog is there."

Wright said the dog bit him three years ago, and his neighbors have talked about getting guns to protect themselves against the dog.

"I don't want my neighbors shooting at a dog in the neighborhood," Wright said. "Something has to be done about this dog."

Latest victim

Jett recalls the day he was bitten.

He said the dog was loose when he and neighbor Randy Maiden were trying to get the dog back inside Lowe's home. As the two men were trying to get the dog into the house, it turned on Jett and bit him on the right forearm, said.

Maiden pulled on the dog's choker in order for the dog to let go.

Jett said he has six staples in his arm, and three times as many scraped cuts.

"Randy [Maiden] saved my arm. If it wasn't for him, I would have lost my arm," he said.

Lowe contends the dog attacked once it was home, because it was protecting the home.

"I don't deny I have a problem with the dog," Lowe said. "He doesn't like people he doesn't know, and he doesn't like people touching his leash or collar."

Although Lowe said she realizes her dog bites, she aims to keep him.

"I want to keep the dog, because I live alone," she said. "I'm afraid of the neighborhood. They know I live alone, and I don't get around very well. I'm not a vicious dog. I don't know what I'll do without him."

Lowe said she tries to keep her dog in her bedroom or in a kennel in her backyard, "but he will run if he gets out."

She said the dog is friendly, "but he doesn't want people touching his collar."

She estimated he has bitten three or four people.

Documented bites

The Howard County Health Department has documented the dog has bitten five people since 2001, said Joe Cross, of the environmental health division. The data doesn't include the most recent bite, because a bite is not documented until after the quarantine period is over.

The incidents include a man who was bitten while trying to catch the dog, two people were bitten when trying to pet the dog, a neighbor was bitten when he stepped on the dog's leash, and a 12-year-old girl was bitten as she walked down an alley near where the dog lived.

Cross said after the girl was bitten in 2003, he contacted local attorneys Brian Oaks and Ken Ferris about legal action that can be taken to put the dog down. The attorneys told him nothing could be done, unless the police had caught the dog in the act of biting someone.

"The courts have to intervene to keep the dog in quarantine for a long period of time or to put the dog down," Cross said. "To my knowledge, there is nothing we can do."

Cross said he sympathizes with Lowe's neighbors, but as long as the dog is healthy he has to authorize his release.

"I would like for this dog to be dead, dead, but it seems like our hands are tied. Unless it is caught in the act, there's nothing we can do."

Police take action

State Rep. John Smith, R-Kokomo, said state statute gives local law enforcement the authority to detain or destroy animals.

"I see a lot of dogs running around," Smith said. "I know there is a leash law in Howard County, but this is a problem that needs to be addressed. We need to protect people against situations like this."

Kokomo police hope to do just that.

Assistant Chief Tom Eddington said he is doing everything in his power to make sure the dog does not return to its owner.

"I am researching all calls for service in the 300 and 400 blocks of East Taylor," Eddington said. "I will submit a report to the council, as they have requested."

Eddington said he is researching options that may be available to keep the dog from returning to the neighborhood.

"I would like the courts to intervene," he said. "I'm going to talk to Ken Ferris tomorrow about what we can do. I hope we're taking measures that ensure the dog does not return to that home. These people have a right to live in safety."

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Reader Comments

(9/1/2005)

at my parents house there is this dog across the street that everyone is afraid of and humane society has been over at their house several times because it's always running around without a leash and they still don't do anything about it. the lady doesn't feed it or even care about it. i just think that if you're going to get a pet take responsibilities like you would for your own child and not let it run all over town. or don't get one at all.

(9/1/2005)

My son has been bitten 2 times by neighbor dogs. Last time, the dog jumped over the fence, into my yard. The dog then bit my son who was playing in the yard. The PC were summoned, of which could do virtually nothing. Mistakes made in the past will be made in the future.

Ann (9/1/2005)

We live in the city and I am tired of seeing animals without a leash, something needs to be done! They are messing every place in our yard and this is unsanitary, we have children with allergies that can lead to asthma!

(9/1/2005)

Kind of makes you rethink Roger O'Connell's trashy yard nuisance, huh?

Linda (9/1/2005)

I am stunned that a policeman has to be a witness to the actual biting for anything done, according to our city attorney. This doesn't sound right.

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