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Dyersburg, Tennessee ~ Wednesday, July 8, 2009

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## Pit bull attack causes injury and outrage

Saturday, April 4, 2009



The 16-year-old victim, who was bitten by the brown female pit bull, received multiple puncture wounds to her left calf. She was taken to Dyersburg Regional Medical Center emergency room for treatment. According to the police report, most of the bite marks were too jagged to receive stitches.

A 16-year-old girl was attacked by two pit bulls on Browning Street close to Hawthorne Avenue.

The juvenile was walking down the street when two pit bulls approached her. One was a brown female and the other was a grayish-color male. They ran toward her and went for her jacket, which she immediately took off.

The gray pit bull then began biting her leg as the brown one latched on and wouldn't let go.

The girl tried not to move and did not fight the dogs off for fear of them attacking her further.

Two other people saw what was going on and tried to help the girl. They attempted to pull her away from the dog, but it held steadfastly to her leg.

Finally, the dog released its grip and ran away with the other one.

A family friend was driving down the street and rushed the girl to the Dyersburg Regional Medical Center emergency room, where she received treatment.



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This female pit bull was one of the dogs that attacked a 16-year-old girl on Browning Street and is alleged to have done the most damage. After the attack, two bystanders were able to chase it and another male pit bull off. The dog had to be shot with a tranquilizer gun to subdue it.

Her wounds consisted of bite marks, scratches, puncture wounds and bleeding. One deep wound had to have a suture, while the others were too jagged for stitches.

The wounds were cleaned and she received antibiotics and a tetanus shot.

Dyersburg police notified animal control of the incident and they located the dogs.

The brown female had to be shot with a tranquilizer due to its aggressive nature, while the other one was caught with a hog catcher. The brown one that did the most damage was a pregnant female.

"This kid could have been killed," said animal control officer Barry McCord. "If it had been a smaller kid, it probably would have crushed her leg."



Animal control officer Barry McCord stands next to the male pit bull that is involved in the attack on a 16-year-old girl. The female pit bull in the background is believed to have done the most damage to the girl. Both dogs are currently being held at the Dyersburg/Dyer County Humane Society shelter while Dyersburg police search for their owners.

McCord and fellow officer Tim Hatch are concerned about pit bull attacks becoming more common as the weather turns warmer.

"This has been my second one (bite case) in a month's time," said Hatch. "Honestly, I think something needs to be done."

McCord said that he believes the owners, if found, should not be able to get these pit bulls back.

"I don't care if they built a pen out of gold, they shouldn't get these dogs back," said McCord. "Because nine times out of 10 somebody's going to have to pay these medical bills and they're not going to pay them."

The victim's father, John Higgins, is angry that his daughter was bitten by the pit bulls.

"Whoever these dogs belong to, I'm going to press charges," said Higgins.

After the incident, he drove around the area where his daughter was bitten.

"There are a whole lot of pits over there," said Higgins.

A police report was filled out on the dog bite and efforts are being made by the Dyersburg Police Department to find the owners of the dogs.

"On dog bites or reports of vicious dogs, the police make every effort to locate the owners," said DPD spokesman Capt. Steve Isbell. "If a violation has occurred, citations will be issued. We enforce the leash law, as well as the vicious dog ordinance."

Police reports show that there were 21 "dog bite" reports written by the DPD in 2008. The figures show that out of the 21 reports, 10 of those bites were from pit bulls, 10 were from dogs whose breed could not be determined and one was from a greyhound.

So far this year, there have been five police reports written on dog bites and four reports written on attempted dog bites. Of those reports, three were on pit bulls and the breed of dog was not known in the other two.

The dogs in this case are being housed at the Dyersburg/Dyer County Humane Society. McCord said they would hold the dogs for 10 days and then ask for their destruction. During this time they will be kept under observation for signs of rabies.

Figures from the Dyersburg City Attorney's office show there were 35 court cases involving dogs within the last year, in the city. Of the 35 cases, 29 of them involved pit bulls. Also, there were six dog bite cases and all of those were from pit bulls. All six of the pit bulls were euthanized, due to either being court ordered or the owner's decision.

From April 12 of last year to March 31 of this year, 278 pit bulls came through the humane society shelter and 211 of those were euthanized. The humane society had 49 total court cases, which included the county and city. They also had 21 cases of dog bites. Not all dog

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bite cases go to court according to Dyersburg/Dyer County Shelter Supervisor Derek Avery. Ten pit bulls were included in the shelter's 21 dog bite cases and eight of them were euthanized. The two remaining pit bulls are the ones involved in this particular case. According to Avery, most of the dog bite cases ultimately end with the dog being euthanized.

Dr. Carol Feather, president of the Dyersburg/Dyer County Humane Society, said they often run out of room at the shelter to accommodate dogs in court cases.

"Sometimes we have to put down some lovely dogs to make room for the dogs in court cases," said Feather.

Within the city of Dyersburg a dog must meet one or more of the following criteria to be classified as vicious:

\* Any dog with a known propensity, tendency, or disposition to attack unprovoked, to cause injury to, or otherwise threaten the safety of human beings or domestic animals.

\* Any dog which, without provocation, attacks, bites, or has attacked or bitten, a human being or domestic animal, on public or private property.

\* Any dog that, without provocation, barks excessively, snaps, bites or manifests a disposition to bark excessively, snap or bite.

\* Any dog owned or harbored, primarily or in part, for dog fighting or any dog trained for dog fighting.

\* Any dog not owned by a governmental or law enforcement agency used primarily to guard public or private property.

\* Any dog that tends to endanger the safety of a human being by the habitual chasing of automobiles, trucks, bicycles, motorcycles, motorbikes, or motor scooters on either public or private property.

If the owner of a dog can be determined then they are issued a summons.

The judge must determine if the dog can be deemed vicious or that it has been maintained under the requirements of the city ordinance.

If the dog is determined to be vicious, then the judge can levy a fine of up to \$50, require that the dog be maintained under the city ordinance or order the destruction of the dog.

The judge can also assess court costs, any fees that the animal shelter has incurred due to the care and boarding of the animal and can hold the owner responsible for the costs of the humane destruction of the dog.

If a dog is allowed to go back to its owner, certain requirements must be met to allow for its return.

One condition would be the confinement of the animal inside or in a securely enclosed, locked structure outdoors with signs indicating the presence of a vicious dog.

Next, the caretaker of the dog is not able to go beyond the premises unless it is restrained on a leash with a secure muzzle.

The owner must also provide proof of liability insurance in the minimum amount of \$50,000 within 30 days and have the city of Dyersburg as an additional insured so they will be notified if the insurance is terminated, lapses or is canceled. Finally, a permit must be issued from an animal control officer saying all conditions have been met and a \$25 fee must be paid for the permit.

So far, only seven permits were issued last year in Dyersburg. Of those seven permits, just one was for a dog bite case, but it was unconfirmed and could not be proved it was a bite.

The owner of the two pit bulls in this case has not been located at this time.

If anyone knows who the owners of the dogs are in this case they are encouraged to call the Dyersburg Police Department at 235-1212.

## Comments

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DBURGIRL,

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