

The Daily Commercial

Pit bulls maul jogger

Two pit bulls in county custody will be euthanized; owner says animals were peaceful at home

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EUSTIS -- Two pit bull dogs mauled a jogger on Getford Road near Eustis Saturday afternoon, Lake County Sheriff's Office and Lake County Animal Services officials said. The dogs are in custody and are slated to be euthanized.

Tracy Whigham, 22, last known address of Zellwood, was bitten on her left leg and right shoulder at about 4:30 p.m. Saturday. She was flown by medical helicopter to Orlando Regional Medical Center, where her condition was unknown Monday, said hospital spokesman Joe Brown.

Marjorie Boyd, Animal Services director, said it was one of the worst attacks she has seen in her 14 years with the county.

"This was a mauling," she said. "A lot of dogs will give warning. This was an unprovoked attack."

Both dogs bit Whigham and are in possession of Lake County Animal Services, Boyd said.

Jessie and Jesica Iaquina, the dogs' owners, handed over the two 9-month-old pit bulls to county officials. They said their dogs had never before caused problems and had interacted with their young daughter peacefully.

"To see something like that happen... I don't want (the dogs) here," Jesica Iaquina said Monday.

"Our hearts go out to (Whigham)," Jessie Iaquina added.

It was unclear whether the dogs were chained or ran free in the yard, Boyd said.

The Iaquinas have not been charged in the incident, which is still under investigation. Investigators must determine the dogs' and owners' history as part of the ensuing investigation, Boyd said.

Pit bulls lead all breeds of dogs and cats in bite incidents the county has investigated in the past two years, Boyd said. They represented 12.7 percent of bite cases in 2007, 12.5 percent in 2008 and 18 percent of cases thus far this year.

Animal Services officials euthanize all animals deemed dangerous to humans, Boyd said. Any animal that is involved in an injury complaint is deemed dangerous, she added.

Jessie Iaquina said he's had several pit bull dogs and has not had problems with them in the past but acknowledged the breed has a reputation for violence.

The incident worried one neighbor. Mishelle Hill, 39, who lives along Getford Road, said she would be shuttling her son to and from the school bus stop near where the mauling occurred to be on the safe side.

"Until it happens, you don't think it could have been your child," she said.

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