

## Pit bull attacks in Syracuse on the rise

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Syracuse (WSYR-TV) - The number of pit bull attacks is growing in the city of Syracuse.

The city's dog control department has responded to 19 pit bull bites so far this year. That's nearly double the amount during all of last year.

It's the beginning of dog control officer Jason Driscoll's shift, and already he's responding to a pit bull call.

When he pulls up to the scene, he sees two adult pit bulls – unleashed -- and trekking along a residential neighborhood, without their owner in sight.

The pair run off to their home when the owners suddenly appear. And when Driscoll confronts them, it's not pretty – immediately, the owners defend their negligence.

"Every now and then they might run on the sidewalk of course, you know how animals are, but the majority of the time we keep them in," says the dogs' owner, Ronnie Stanley.

But not that day; the dogs got out through an open gate, and they have a history of bad behavior -- last year, city dog control says one of them bit a little girl.

The owners were ticketed for that incident, and now they're getting another one.

The most severe pit bull attacks happen during the spring and summer months, mainly because more people are outside and coming in contact with them.

"Hunting dogs, you don't have to teach to hunt -- those dogs you don't have to teach to be aggressive," says dog control supervisor Shane Chimber.

If you're confronted by an aggressive pit bull on the loose, dog control officers say: number one, don't run – instead, command the dog in a stern voice to stop, all while walking backwards, slowly.

"As soon as you panic they sense that and they know fear and that will sometimes trigger them to attack you," says Driscoll.

Driscoll, who has a pit bull himself, urges all owners to keep a close eye on their pets and especially keep them out of the streets without a leash.

Syracuse dog control officers say they run into trouble with other dog breeds as well, but pit bulls make up the majority of reported attacks.

Officers are beefing up patrols in targeted areas and parks this summer.

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(WSYR-TV)