

## Dog law reviewed after attack ; Neighbors thanked for battling pit bulls

Carolyn Starks, Tribune staff reporter. Chicago Tribune. Chicago, Ill.: Nov 9, 2005. pg. 3

Four adults--including the dogs' owner, Scott Sword, 41--were attacked Saturday as they tried to stop the three pit bulls from mauling the children. The dogs escaped from Sword's home in the 6700 block of Hawthorne Drive. All of the adults have been released from hospitals.

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As officials considered Tuesday whether stricter laws are needed to control potentially vicious breeds of dogs, the families of two children attacked by pit bulls near Cary thanked neighbors who risked their lives battling the animals.

Nick Foley, 10, remained in critical condition at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge and "now faces a difficult road to recovery," his family said in a statement.

The family of Jourdan Lamarre, 10, who also was bitten, said she, too, faces a challenging recovery. She was in fair condition at the same hospital.

Four adults--including the dogs' owner, Scott Sword, 41--were attacked Saturday as they tried to stop the three pit bulls from mauling the children. The dogs escaped from Sword's home in the 6700 block of Hawthorne Drive. All of the adults have been released from hospitals.

Sword has not been charged but could face animal-ordinance violations, McHenry County State's Atty. Louis Bianchi said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, McHenry County Board Chairman Ken Koehler said he is forming a committee to discuss whether local laws can be enacted to prevent a similar attack by any breed of dog considered vicious.

"I'm not going to have a knee-jerk reaction. The easy thing to say is the breed is bad," Koehler said. "I firmly believe we have issues with dangerous and vicious dogs" of any breed.

A bill that would have targeted dangerous dogs fizzled in a state legislative committee in March but is being resurrected by its sponsor, state Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago).

The bill would have required owners of certain breeds to license their dogs as dangerous and to maintain canine liability insurance. It also would have required dangerous dogs to wear an orange tag in public.

Sandoval said he wants to amend the bill to say that dangerous dogs also must wear a muzzle while in public.

"I introduced it to bring some law and order ... as it relates to these dangerous dogs, but I met a lot of resistance by the dog associations and breeders," Sandoval said Tuesday. "I believe it is appropriate now that I resubmit it."

Sheriff Keith Nygren said enhancing laws to give a judge or jury the authority to increase the penalty based on the severity of the injuries may be needed.

"It would be some kind of accountability for owners with certain dogs, giving the courts greater flexibility to give greater penalties if catastrophic calamities occur," he said.

But to pit bull lover and trainer Silvia Simmons, the dog owners are the problem, not the breed. Simmons owns A and S Rescue, a pit bull rescue operation near Cary.

Simmons has five pit bulls, and one is licensed as a therapy dog, she said.

"Not training a dog is a recipe for disaster," Simmons said. "When you have a large, powerful breed of dog, you are taking on more responsibility that goes with that breed."

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