

Pit Bulls Concern Neighbors in Cedar Rapids Neighborhood

By Mark Geary, Reporter

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CEDAR RAPIDS -- Pit Bulls and Rottweilers are involved in more than half of the fatal dog attacks on people in America. The Centers for Disease Control reports most of those dogs weren't on leashes.

This weekend, several Pit Bulls attacked and killed another dog. It happened on Cedar Rapids' Southeast Side. People who live there say this kind of thing happens all too often.

Bob Ritchison loves dogs, but, he's always cautious around pit bulls. He still remembers when he got attacked.

"I could tell by the look in that dog's eye that he wanted a piece of me. He grabbed me by the arm and would not let go," he said.

Months later, one of Ritchison's dogs became a victim, too.

"Got it by the throat and it wouldn't let go. I was kicking that dog. I broke my toe, I was kicking it so hard. It didn't have any effect," he said.

Ritchison isn't the only one complaining about pit bulls in the neighborhood.

"There's been some fighting between animals and loose ones running around," neighbor Dave Hanover said.

Cedar Rapids Animal Control gets calls every day about pit bulls on the loose.

"When they do bite a person, it can be really bad. There have been people (I'm sure you've seen the statistics) that have been killed by these dogs," Jim Clark, Cedar Rapids Animal Control supervisor, said.

Monday afternoon, a pit bull broke through a window screen and wandered on to the roof.

No one got hurt, but neighbors still worried.

"I've seen what pit bulls can do to kids and other small dogs. It's scary," Angela Hedrick-Behm said.

Hedrick-Behm lives nearby and has a pet Rotweiler, but she insists her dog isn't aggressive.

"She's about seven years old and my two-year-old daughter rides her like a horse," Hedrick-Behm said.

Hedrick-Behm got the dog for protection.

"It's not the greatest neighborhood in the world. It's not the nicest neighborhood," she said.

Like most of the neighbors, Ritchison says he has no problem with dogs kept on a leash, but he carries pepper spray now just in case another pit bull becomes aggressive.

Animal Control officials say you should never turn your back to a pit bull that looks like it might attack.

Instead, remain calm and do not make direct eye contact with the animal.