

Pit bulls attack woman

Pair jumped fence; victim needs skin grafts

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A 59-year-old woman was walking through the yard of a St. Paul home Monday afternoon, attempting to serve legal papers, when she saw a pair of pit bulls walk into view.

"Hi, puppies," Joann Jungmann, of Willernie, said in greeting the dogs - one of which had just been released from the pound after an earlier incident, authorities said.

The dogs rushed forward, jumped a 3-foot-high chain-link fence gate separating the front and back yards of the Dayton's Bluff home and chased after the woman, said Jungmann's close friend Michael Holmes.

Just before she could reach her curbside Pontiac Bonneville sedan, the dogs dragged her to the ground.

"I heard the pandemonium that dogs will make. Then I heard the screaming," said Heidi Kult, who lives across the street from the house at 1038 Conway St., where the 2 p.m. attack occurred.

Jungmann kept trying to climb into her car - but the dogs kept pulling her out, neighbors said. Her own dog - a 65-pound Chesapeake Bay retriever - stayed in the car, cowering away from the open car door.

"She yelled, 'C'mon, Caleb, save me!' Of course, it probably would've gotten killed," Holmes said of Jungmann's dog.

Someone called the dogs off or scared them away - but not before Jungmann was wounded severely enough to leave blood spattered on her car door.

"Her jeans, they had so much blood all over them, you couldn't ascertain what the injuries were," Kult said, adding that Jungmann's hands were bandaged after being "pretty badly ripped up."

Jungmann was taken to Regions Hospital, where she was in good condition Monday night. Holmes said Jungmann's legs, arms and hands were mauled - but her forearm took the brunt of the attack, badly enough to require skin grafts.

"We're talking the skin is flat-out missing in some areas," Holmes said. "Gouges out of the forearm, (flesh) missing. "

A sign on the front door of the home instructs visitors to go to the side. Jungmann, in her part-time work serving legal documents for private attorneys, did just that, Holmes said.

On Monday night, there was a "Beware of Dog" sign on the gate of the fence the dogs reportedly leaped.

St. Paul Animal Control supervisor Bill Stephenson said the dogs were being held at the animal control center, where they would remain in quarantine for rabies observation for 10 days.

The dogs' owner was considering "signing them over" to be put down, Stephenson said.

"He was pretty shaken up," Stephenson said.

If the owner does not release the dogs to animal control, Stephenson said, "they'll likely be declared at some level. I would guess they would both be declared 'dangerous' right off the bat. Possibly even destroyed."

A dog with a history of trouble can be declared either "potentially dangerous" or "dangerous," or it can be immediately destroyed, depending on how badly it attacks or threatens someone.

One of the two pit bulls that attacked Jungmann was in the process of being declared potentially dangerous because of a recent incident, Stephenson said, and had just been released from quarantine at the animal control center.

"It was going through the process (for being declared potentially dangerous). ... I believe the paperwork was just getting ready to go," said Stephenson, who added that, with appeals, it sometimes takes as long as six months for a dog to be tagged as at least potentially dangerous.

Stephenson, reached at home Monday evening, said he was not certain of the details of the previous incident.

Kult also said her brother was chased by at least one of the dogs during a visit in October while he was checking the gates of her home.

No one at the home where the dogs live could be reached for comment Monday evening.

There have been several brutal dog attacks in Minneapolis in recent weeks.

On Friday, a 4-year-old girl was mauled so badly she needed 13 staples to close a severe head wound; on April 13, an 8-year-old boy was attacked as he walked home from school by an Akita that got loose from a neighbor's yard; and on March 26, a 37-year-old woman came close to death after a pit bull and an American bulldog attacked her at a neighbor's home.

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