



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Update #2 - Dog Owners Fined - Woman Critical After Vicious Dog Attack

Date: August 10, 2020

Update #2

In a hearing before the Special Master on 08-07-20, all three defendants (dog owners) were found guilty of the following Hernando County ordinance violations:

- Unrestrained Animal
- Animal Bite
- Unvaccinated Animal
- Unlicensed Animal.

Each defendant was ordered to pay fines as follows:

- Steven Laporta
 - o Fine - \$3,131.66
- Daniel Laporta
 - o Fine - \$5,781.66
- Isabell Gomes
 - o Fine - \$3,131.66.

After being hospitalized for several months and spending a considerable amount of time in (in-patient) rehabilitation, the victim of the dog attack was finally able to return to her home within the last few weeks.

The victim is still recovering from the numerous surgeries that were required after the attack.

Update #1 – 02-10-20

Over the weekend, the victim of the dog attack was airlifted from Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point to a Manatee County hospital, where she will receive specialized treatment of her wounds. The victim is still listed in critical condition.

The victim's small dog was not injured in the attack. The dog is being cared for by a family member.

The original release stated that seven dogs were found in the residence at 11079 Mayflower Road. Further investigation revealed there were actually six dogs in the residence, five large dogs and one small dog (Pomeranian – not involved). The five large dogs were removed by Animal Enforcement Officers on that date and delivered to Hernando County Animal Services.

Investigation revealed the dogs belonged to various adults (4) who all live in the residence. One dog, a terrier mix, which was confirmed by witnesses to not have been involved in the attack, was approved to be released back to the owner. It is unknown if the owner retrieved the dog yet. The dogs involved in the attack were "owner surrendered" to Hernando County Animal Services, with euthanasia forms completed.

The three owners of the dogs involved in the attack each received Civil Citations for the following:

- Animal Bite
- Unrestrained Animal
- Unvaccinated Animal
- Unlicensed Animal.

The Civil Citations were written for a mandatory court appearance in May. At the time of the court hearing, the magistrate has the discretion to impose fines for each of these citations, totaling in the thousands of dollars.

In what appears to be a pack mentality act of aggression, the four dogs together attacked the victim. Animal Enforcement Officers want to remind citizens that animals must remain under control at all times, and that there is a greater possibility of aggressive behavior when multiple animals, such as dogs, are together – demonstrating the aggressive, pack mentality.

The case is still open and active.

Original Information – 02-07-2020

On 02-07-20 at approximately 12:09 p.m., 9-1-1 operators in the Hernando County Sheriff's Office Emergency Communications Center began receiving calls regarding a dog attack.

The first 9-1-1 caller stated that her dog(s) got out and was attacking her neighbor.

Operators began receiving other calls almost immediately. Callers frantically told operators that four dogs were attacking a woman and the woman was bleeding badly. Callers also

stated that numerous people were present, attempting to stop the attack, but were unable to get the dogs to stop attacking the victim. Neighbors used pieces of gutter, sticks, a lawn chair, etc., to no avail, in an effort to remove the dogs from the victim.

It is believed the attack lasted for five to seven minutes, until the arrival of the first units on scene, Hernando County Fire Rescue. When firefighters entered the backyard and observed the dogs still attacking the victim, they utilized equipment from their fire apparatus to disperse the dogs. This intervention stopped the attack.

The person responsible for the dogs was able to get them back inside the residence.

The victim was treated on scene for extensive injuries then airlifted to a local trauma center in critical condition.

Several others, who attempted to intervene, were also bitten by the dogs. Two adults were transported to a local hospital by Hernando County Fire Rescue. Three adults, who received minor injuries, refused medical treatment.

Animal Enforcement Officers removed seven dogs from 11079 Mayflower Road. It is believed four to five of the dogs were involved in the attack. The dogs were delivered to Hernando County Animal Services.

Preliminary investigation revealed the victim and her small dog were in the victim's backyard when the dogs spotted them from inside their own residence. It was stated that a slider-door was not closed properly and upon seeing the small dog and victim, the dogs were able to push open the slider and charge them. The victim bent down to pick up her dog and when she did so, she was attacked.

The case is active at this time. Additional information will be released when available.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.