

Local News

# Cheektowaga neighborhood wants aggressive dogs removed

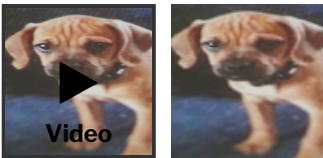
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CHEEKTOWAGA, N.Y. -- A Cheektowaga family wants action by the town following a deadly dog attack in which their beloved pet died.

Several large dogs attacked and killed a pugle Sunday and also seriously injured a neighbor.

Sunday's incident is not the first time dogs from 808 Borden have jumped or broken the wooden fence that surrounds them, and Sarah and Charles Kegler feel the incident should never have happened.

Darryl Gainey is their next door neighbor. He heard screaming and tried to save their pugle, named Pug.

"It was the worst thing I've ever witnessed in person," Gainey said.

He tried to fend off one dog in particular, but ultimately the dog bit his hand and tore open his thigh.

Sarah Kegler rushed Pug to the vet. Kegler had brought her children with her so that they could see Pug in case he didn't make it, but they were too late. The doctor said the injuries were too much.

"She took me in another room and told me that when she went to get him, he was gone," Kegler said through tears.

According to Sarah and her husband Charles Kegler, the dogs broke down the wooden fence that separates 808 Borden from nearly 20 other properties. Three boards of a lighter colored wood in their backyard show where dogs barreled through the fence on Sunday when Pug was attacked.

It had happened before. The Keglers reported the problem to Cheektowaga's dog warden, Scott Thrun, twice in 2015.

"He told [the owners of the dogs] that he should put up a chainlink fence. When we asked him if he confirmed that they did put up the chainlink fence, he said that he did. He said that he went and personally inspected it and that he checked on the dogs on multiple occasions to make sure that they were contained," Sarah said.

Three years later, anyone can see the large backyard is bordered only by a wooden fence. Assistant Police Chief Jim Speyer says the dog warden can only make suggestions, a judge would have had to mandate a metal fence. Speyer said since there weren't complaints between 2015 and now, the Thrun assumed everything was okay. Speyer explained Thrun works indirectly for the police department and has been a certified animal control officer for more than a decade.

Other neighbors say this has been going on for years, and several say Thrun hasn't followed up on calls in which he said he'd visit certain properties or interview neighboring homeowners.

"These dogs are menace, they're a nuisance, it's on record that they're nuisance. I feel I'm getting conflicting information from the dog warden," Gainey said.

The police department says of five dogs on the property, four were involved in the attack are currently quarantined by the town pending an aggressive dog hearing scheduled Monday, October 15. Several neighbors are expected to speak their minds then and present the town board a petition signed by more than 30 people to have the dogs permanently removed.

"It took us going to town hall and lighting fire under people to get them to actually do something and remove those dogs," Charles Kegler said. "This was preventable, it never should have happened. Thank god it wasn't my children."

After the attack, Sarah Kegler followed up with her veterinarian for an autopsy report on Pug's death.

She said it was then the office told her that Thrun had called there offering to pick up the dog and pay for Pug's cremation. Kegler felt that was unusual and called to ask him why.

According to Sarah, Thrun told her was hoping to help out by saving their family some money. Assistance Chief Speyer said he has no reason to believe right now that Thrun made the offer for anything other than to be helpful.

Speyer says the Cheektowaga Police Department will investigate complaints they receive. The town has referred animal control questions to the police department.

According to records, 808 Borden is owner by Michael Khalil.

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