

Pit bull attacks Lewiston man

Police officer wounds dog with shotgun

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By **CODY BLOOMSBURG** of the Tribune

Robert Clark had to choose between a cellphone, an ax or a chain saw when a pit bull charged him Monday.

He went with two out of three - calling police with the phone and fending off the dog with the ax.

The attack ended with a Lewiston police officer firing two shots at the dog, hitting it once in the hip, said Lewiston Police Capt. Tom Greene, and the dog's owner turning himself in to the Nez Perce County Jail for a warrant for failing to appear in court for a March dangerous dog citation.

But Clark said there were tense moments before police arrived and the dog opted to charge a better-armed officer instead of the 52-year-old man with an ax.

Clark said he was cutting logs for woodworking in his backyard in the 700 block of Warner Avenue shortly before noon when he saw the next-door neighbor's pit bull jump through the rail fence and start biting at horses in the pasture.

Clark yelled at the dog to stop, drawing its attention, which in turn led to the 6-foot-9-inch-tall man having to choose a weapon to keep the dog at bay.

The dog circled him, lunging at his legs and then jumping at his throat, Clark said. He held the phone with one hand and kept the animal away with short, measured swings of the ax.

"I just held my ground," Clark said. But the dog became more violent, he added, and it became clear the pit bull was enjoying it.

"It was a game to him," Clark said.

The dog found new sport, though, when Officer Eric Olson came into view from the open backyard, Clark said.

Olson was about 90 feet away when the dog turned and ran at him, Greene said.

After a short trot, it bared its teeth, growled, and charged Olson, Clark said.

The dog was about 20 feet from Olson when he fired his first shot at it from a shotgun, Greene said.

Clark said he believed the shot missed and the dog ran past the officer, through the front yard and was running broadside in front of a home across the street when Olson fired again.

The dog ran away and was found about a half a block away in a tool shed in the 3000 block of Seventh Street, Greene said.

The pit bull's owner, Craig Pettit, 26, was called and brought the dog, named Chance, out of the shed. Police then took the animal to Rustebakke Veterinary Service in Clarkston, Greene said.

Contacted Monday night, Dr. Dave Rustebakke said Chance was awake and should fully recover.

Monday's incident was the fourth time police had been called about an animal problem involving Pettit's dog, Greene said.

Clark said one of those times it chased his wife onto their porch.

"In canvassing the neighborhood most all of the neighbors indicated that the dog is aggressive," Green said.

Pettit had a warrant for his arrest for failing to appear in court after being cited on charges of having a dangerous dog on March 11, Greene said.

Pettit turned himself into Nez Perce County Jail Monday afternoon and posted bond for the failure to appear charge and two additional charges of owning a dangerous dog.

The dog will be declared dangerous, Greene said, and will no longer be allowed within city limits.

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