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Killer pit bull to live but under restrictions

by Elise Armacost
Staff writer
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Bad, bad Leroy the pit bull terrier, who mauled one dog and killed another last spring, has been spared from execution.

Leroy's fate has been hanging in the balance since June 3, when he was impounded at the county's Animal Control headquarters after jumping the fence at his owner's Glen Burnie home and killing a mixed poodle named Blackie.

County attorneys had filed a complaint asking the court to have Leroy -- a kind of pit bull known as an American Staffordshire terrier -- put to sleep.

On Wednesday, Anne Arundel County District Judge Martha Rasin refused to have the dog destroyed, even though she found him to be vicious. Instead, she told county attorneys to draft an order imposing numerous restrictions on Leroy and his owners, Margaret and Samuel Hoffman of the 100 block of Forest Road.

"He's not a free dog," said Assistant County Attorney Cheryl Boudreau, noting that, unless he's being walked, Leroy must be kept in a secure, enclosed structure secured by a lock whenever he's outside. He will not be released from Animal Control until the county inspects his new shelter at home.

At home, the dog can be walked by family members only, and he must be leashed with a harness and chain. The judge also ruled that the Huffmans must take animal behavioral education classes; if they board Leroy, they must use a licensed kennel that has been given a copy of the court order.

The Huffmans also must license Leroy and their two other dogs.

The owners of Leroy's victims said they are satisfied with the judge's decision, but fear what will happen if the dog gets out again.

"I'm afraid a child might be next," said Blackie's owner, Shirley Sarro, 200 block of McGuirk Drive. "{Mrs. Hoffman} kept saying my dog nudged her fence. What if a child had done it? Would he have torn the child apart like he did my dog?"

On the day he died, Blackie wandered over to Leroy's yard after breaking his chain.

Barney, the shepherd-basset mix that Leroy mauled April 29, was in his own yard in the 100 block of Forest Drive when he was attacked. He suffered a broken jaw and lost three teeth, among other injuries, but is recuperating, said his owner, Sharon David.

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"I'm satisfied that the judge was fair and took every precaution to protect the animals and kids in the neighborhood," David said. "But I think if {Leroy} got out again he would kill again. I truly believe it's a killer dog."

The Huffmans could not be reached.

Boudreau said this was the only case she can recall in which the owners of a dog that killed refused to have it put to sleep.

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