

Man bit by pit bull outside Raymond's, gets rabies shots



Last Saturday a Montclair man walking by Raymond's outdoor seating was bitten by a pit bull that was there with a patron. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

moss@montclairlocal.news

A man was bitten by a pit bull outside of Raymond's restaurant on Church Street last weekend, with the victim requiring rabies shots after the canine's owner fled the scene with her pet.

The 50-year-old Montclair man went to HackensackUMC Mountainside for treatment on Saturday right after the incident, and the Township Police Department was called to the facility after receiving the report, Det. Lt. David O'Dowd said in an email.

The injured man told police "that he was walking south on Church Street when he passed a female with two dogs sitting at an outside table at Raymond's," O'Dowd said.

"He stated that one of the dogs, described as a cream-colored pit bull, leaped up and bit his right forearm near his elbow," O'Dowd said.

The Montclair Health Department is investigating, according to O'Dowd. He referred additional questions to the department,, which couldn't be reached for comment on Wednesday.

Bridget Soyka-Smith on Saturday posted on the Share Montclair Facebook page that her fiancé, who she didn't identify, was the man that the dog bit.

"Today around 2:30 pm in front of Raymond's on Church St., my fiancé was bit in the arm by a liver-colored pit bull dog who lunged at him," Soyka-Smith wrote. "We are currently in Mountain ER getting rabies shots. The first of five required in a month! The patrons were seated at an outdoor table with another white Pomeranian-type dog. They fled immediately with their two dogs."

She asked for help identifying the pit bull's owner.

"First, does anyone know who this woman was?" Soyka-Smith wrote. "And secondly, dogs should not be allowed at restaurants as being around food makes dogs unpredictable. Any help from anyone would be appreciated."

Soyka-Smith, a Montclair resident and business owner, couldn't be reached for comment.

But on Facebook she said a Mountainside doctor told her fiancé that, without knowing the pit bull's medical history, he had to get the rabies shots.

"The ER physician insisted that the shots cannot wait until we found the owner," Soyka-Smith wrote. "He stressed that rabies

equates to death and we must start the shots and finish them out for the next four injections and cannot wait to see if the owner comes forward. He made it very clear this is very serious.”

As a result of the incident, Raymond’s has asked its staff to be extra cautious about dogs at its seating on Church Street, according to the co-owner of the restaurant’s outlets in Montclair and Ridgewood, Joanne Ricci.

“I have personally met with every single staff member to reinforce for them that any dog showing any sign of aggression cannot be at the restaurant,” she said. “Owners need to have their dogs on a short leash. I mean we’re taking every precaution that we can.”

Raymond’s already seats patrons with dogs on the perimeter of its outdoor seating “so they’re not in the middle of that area so that anyone who doesn’t like dogs or is allergic or whatever doesn’t need to be right by the dogs,” Ricci said.

The restaurant supplied the bite victim with a phone number for the patron who had the pit bull, according to Ricci. That phone number was also shared with the police, Soyka-Smith said on Facebook.

“I’m going to do everything I can to find this person,” Ricci said.

On social media some people called for Raymond’s, or the township, to ban dogs from sitting at outdoor cafés.

“We’re not banning dogs right now,” Ricci said. “I’m a dog owner. The best part of summer is we get to see the dogs. I’m working with my staff to be a little more pro-active ... I really hope it doesn’t come to where we need to not allow the dogs, because we love the dogs. And it’s not the dog, it’s the owner. And it’s not something that has been an issue.”

