

Witness Statement of incident that occurred on August 16, 2024 at approximately 6pm.

I was walking my dog around the block. It should be noted that this is the first time I have walked my dog alone in a couple of years. Bear was wearing a choke style collar as well as an eCollar. I have participated in private training with my dog and the rest of my family for several sessions with more than one training company over the years. We have learned to avoid other dogs on walks as Bear likes to play but sometimes others are scared of German Shepherds so we always keep our distance.

I noticed a gentleman walking with his large dog in the distance as I was approaching my own home. I walked on to the driveway of a neighbour to give the person and their dog sufficient space to pass without incident.

Bear was first in a seated position, then lying down next to me and I had the leash in my hand in the 'sit on the dog' position as I have been trained. Usually when other dog owners see us move to make room as I did, they appreciate the gesture pass through swiftly. This gentleman seemed to slow down and walk very slowly and then he stopped across from the driveway I was on. I assumed he wasn't scared of Bear by his actions.

Bear seems to have reacted when they stopped. I am assuming because he saw it as an invitation to play. He jolted up which caused me to fall down on my bottom. I should note that I am quite petite and weigh very close to the same weight as Bear. The man would have seen me on the floor while trying to hold on to the leash. This ought to have been a signal for him to leave had he not wanted an interaction with me and my dog. Instead he stayed. I was using all of my strength to hold on to the leash but felt myself being dragged down the driveway and pulled into a flat position. I wish I had the foresight or ability to reach the e-collar trigger and use it but I didn't. I wish I had the ability to yell out at the man to leave but I didn't.

I could not hold on any longer and lost the leash grip. I looked to see where Bear was and I saw that he went straight to the other dog. I immediately got up to get the leash and get a hold of Bear. Unfortunately, the other dog owner then raised his large dog above his head. I appreciate that this may have been what the dog owner thought was best, but for Bear it became a game and he was jumping up on the owner. He did not lower his dog to the ground, I did not see Bear bite the dog owner.

I got back to Bear and took control of him. The dog owner continued to berate me and not leave. He started to yell at me using many profanities and made comments about what ought to happen to Bear and derogatory comments towards me. This was very upsetting. Despite his language and what he was saying I continued to apologize to the man. I pointed to my home and stated that he could follow me to my home if he wished to speak to me further.

He continued yelling which caused other neighbours to come out of their homes. It was at this point that the man finally walked away. I was extremely distraught and felt exhausted. One of the neighbours was a blonde woman who asked if I was 'ok' and then left. The second

neighbour introduced himself as Gary and took Bear's leash from me and told me to catch my breath. Bear was completely fine with the other neighbours as he is with everyone. He is a dog that is used by our trainer to show other dogs how to behave correctly in training sessions.

I also want to make it clear that at no point did the man state to me when he was berating me that he had been bitten. Hearing that there was a bite was a shock to me. I was worried Bear might have caused a scratch with his nails or damaged his clothing but I did not see any type of biting actions from Bear. He was barking and jumping up to try and get to this mans dog.

I returned home and cried about the situation and the horrible things the man had said to me. When I reflect on the situation I feel terrible if this man was actually bitten but I also wish he had just walked away. The whole situation was avoidable. I hope to never see this man again as the things he said were extremely hurtful, rude and frankly disgusting. Especially since I look a lot younger then my age, he must of thought he was yelling at a teenager. I have reflected on what I would do differently in the future and I think I will spend more time training with the e-collar so that I am more effective at accessing it in an emergency situation.

About 30 minutes after the incident I saw the same man with his dog outside my home while I was retrieving something from my car. He just stood there staring at me and did not speak to me. I did not engage with him and he did not take the opportunity to say anything to me about being bitten or the incident. I noticed that he had changed his clothes and was on the phone and holding his dog's leash with the other hand.

Let me know if there is any further information that you require.

Senna Gill