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PET DOGS BRED TO KILL
By MARK BUTTLER

They're land-going, white pointer sharks
ROGUE dog owners had created thousands of cross-bred killing machines, the **RSPCA** said yesterday.
"They're land-going, white pointer sharks," an inspector said.
"They are purposely trained to attack."
The animal welfare group spoke out after an 81-year-old woman was fatally mauled when she tried to stop her pet dogs from fighting.
The dogs, a heeler and a great dane-pitbull terrier, turned on frail Isabelle Jean Sugars.
RSPCA inspector Kevin Apostolides said a great dane-pitbull cross was a grotesque and potentially lethal creature.
It combined the pitbull's stamina and jaw strength with the larger dog's size and muscle.
"It's like Jeff Fenech crossed with Mike Tyson," Mr Apostolides said. Mrs Sugars was savaged when she fell over and could not regain her footing.
Her nine-year-old great nephew watched helpless as the dogs attacked.
The boy, then alone on a remote property, wandered around for hours disoriented and distraught.
His father and elder brother, 12, found him when they returned home. Police have been unable to question the nine-year-old because he is in shock.
The dogs were destroyed yesterday.
The attack happened on a property 50km from Charters Towers in north Queensland about 1.30pm on Sunday.
The woman and boy had gone to kennels where four family dogs were kept in separate cages. "She let one out for exercise and was doing repairs to one of the other kennels," Det-Sgt Barry Maff, of Charters Towers police, said.
"The other dog got out and they started to fight.
"She stood in between the two dogs and they attacked her. She's been around them for a while and probably thought she could step in between them."
He said the **bull** terrier had been a family pet for nine years.
"The kids had always played with the dogs - they were used for mustering and pig hunting," Det-Sgt Maff said.
The **RSPCA** fears a similar tragedy in Victoria.
Mr Apostolides said macho dog owners who wanted to show off had created ferocious cross-breeds, usually by mating pitbull terriers and larger breeds.
He said the owners were only interested in a tough guy image and most had little idea how to control or care for their vicious and powerful pets.
"Their idea of training is to kick it in the guts and chain it up for 20 hours a day," Mr Apostolides said.
"They encourage their dogs to be aggressive. They have no qualms about attacking."
He said the dogs posed a danger to people, especially the elderly and children.
Lost Dogs Home general manager Graeme Smith said great danes were increasingly being mated with pitbull terriers. He said they could be lethal weapons if not controlled.
Dr Smith estimated up to 8000 people were attacked by dogs in Victoria each year.
He said most attacks were not reported.
A Surrey Hills woman said yesterday she would never forget a street attack on her child by two dogs.
Jane Holder said daughter Alison, 5, twice ended up in hospital after being bitten by a german shepherd and a Jack Russell-silky terrier cross.
Mrs Holder said Alison was attacked as she sat by the family's mail box and could have been killed but for the intervention of a passer-by.
"She would have been dead if it wasn't for a girl who stepped in," she said. "Irresponsible dog owners aren't getting the message that this shouldn't happen. Will it take the death of a child?" Alison suffered

bites to the neck, ribs, buttocks and back.

After treatment at Box Hill Hospital, she was admitted a week later when the wounds became infected.

An animal behavior expert said yesterday it could be fatal to intervene in a dogfight.

Veterinarian Dr Judith Blackshaw said: "Dogs in a fight have no appreciation of what may be going on around them. They are generally oblivious to pain.

"The best way to separate them is to throw a blanket over them or use a garden hose to spray them."

END OF STORY

Caption: CLOSE CALL: ALISON HOLDER AND MOTHER JANE. PICTURE: ANDREW BATSCH. ALISON'S INJURIES. BREEDING FEAR; RSPCA INSPECTOR KEVIN APGOLIDES NIGHTMARE CROSSES; PIT BULL TERRIER. ROTTWEILER. GREAT DANE. MASTIFF. BLUE HEELER.

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