

## **Hens Night Ends In Dog Attack**

*This incident occurred 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008 and I thank Toni for allowing me to interview, photograph her and publish her story.*

Hen's nights are traditional nights of party, fun and frivolity to celebrate with the bride to be before her big day. Not all are boozy or wild and some are held at the bridesmaid's homes.

Toni had attended a hens' night function at the bridesmaid's house a week prior to the wedding. Not a big drinker and having to drive, she remained sensible in her approach to alcohol. The party was winding up and had been held outside on the back patio. Toni who had been inside when the party wrapped up realized she had left her handbag outside on the deck. Unbeknown to her, not only had all bags been bought inside the home but the two resident dogs, breed unknown had been returned home. The two dogs had been baby sat at the in-laws home for the night of the party.

Toni stepped outside to the back patio, closing the door behind her to retrieve her bag. She was immediately approached by two large dogs who confronted her. The dogs flanked her, one on the right and the other on the left.

Toni takes up the story...

"I remember I had my back to the door. I stayed silent and half turned grabbing at the door handle as I stared at the dogs. There was no warning growl that I remember but suddenly the white one barked. That was when the black one attacked. It grabbed me on the left calf, let go then went for my right calf. It then let go and went back at me and got me under the left half. I remember I yelped but not very loud. As I turned to run inside it grabbed me and bit me on the bottom."

In shock Toni was rushed to hospital where doctors informed her that the severest bite had been millimeters away from surgery. It was exceptionally deep and had dug a hole in her leg. Toni received multiple stitches and antibiotics and was laid off work for several weeks.

The dog that had been bitten was put down the next day.

"I don't blame the owners" she said. I know what its like to think you have a great pet only to have to put it down due to snapping or biting. I had to do the same once myself. I just wish I had known the dogs were out there, I would never have gone out if I had been warned".

Never the less, those owners were irresponsible in containing aggressive dogs on their premise without warning or informing everyone at the party that the dogs had been returned and were dangerous.

Toni did what she thought was best, eyeballing the dogs, not taking her eye off them and trying to get back inside. The general public are uneducated in Dog Language and Behaviour as it is, let alone how to handle an attack like this. While we would never pre-empt what could happen in a dog attack there are basic rules to follow.

- Never eyeball an aggressive dog. In the dog's eyes this means all out war. It is not dog edicate to eyeball unless you are requesting a fight – human behaviour is the same.

- Stand still and slowly tilt your head to one side keeping peripheral vision on the dog without making eye contact. (turning your head to the side means you are wanting to avoid conflict.)
- Keep your back to a wall or slowly move back to one if at all possible
- Never turn your back to open a door, if you know there is life on the other side, knock or slowly attempt to open the door with your back facing it. If you turn away from the dog, the dog most likely will attack.
- While your stress levels will have hit the roof, it is imperative to remain calm. Screaming makes things worse and will antagonize the dog.
- While yawning is a calming behavioural signal, if you show your teeth to the dog (yell or scream or yawn), the dog may attack. If you can yawn in long slow yawns without showing your teeth, do so. It may calm both of you down. (yes with your head still tilted to the side)
- If the dog attacks running will make it worse as the dog sees you as prey. ROLL up into a tight ball with your hands closed in fists on either side of your neck to protect it. Your elbows come up around your ears and you ball your body up as tightly as you can on the ground. Making yourself as small as possible and being as still as possible generally will stop the attack.

#### **Editors Note:**

Dogs are not born aggressive. Dogs genetically bred to guard do however have higher tendencies to become territorial and or reactive. ANY dog that has not been trained and heavily socialized with people, a variety of environments, exposed to other dog company outside of their home will become prone to fear aggression which can lead to bites.

Dogs do not come with manuals. As their guardian it is up to you to learn how to look after your dog by finding a qualified Trainer who works with humane methods. [www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au](http://www.deltasocietyaustralia.com.au).

It is also critical to DO YOUR HOMEWORK when you are looking at a puppy – Breed wise.

Example of two totally different breeds

Border Collies don't belong in small backyards, they become snappy and housebound unless they are trained in agility, exercised by being run kilometers every day or worked.

Mastiffs while a natural lazy breed don't need anywhere near the same type of exercise, must be heavily socialized to avoid becoming fearful of people. Under socialized dogs of any breed will become withdrawn and shy of people and other dogs if not socialized and become fear aggressive.

There are good and bad breeders out there. Go and visit the parents and ask these breeders what they have bred for. Puppies well bred and socialized by breeders who know what they are doing should not balk at much and their recovery level should be excellent. Puppies that run and hide should NOT be bought no matter how cute! In fact the cute factor should not come into effect. If you are buying a pup just because it's cute – be warned! You have bought a puppy for the wrong reason!