

'Dog Whisperer' Cesar Millan sued in pit bull attack

By RUBEN VIVES STAFF WRITER, FEB. 4, 2015

Cesar Millan, the star of television's "The Dog Whisperer," is being sued by a woman who claims she was attacked by a vicious pit bull that had been prematurely released by Millan's dog training center.

The woman, a critical care nurse in Florida, claims she suffered "disfiguring open wounds, deep muscle and tendon lacerations" and bone fractures in the Sept. 23, 2014, attack, just six days after the dog had been released by Millan's Dog Psychology Center.

Attorneys for Alison Bitney said in the complaint that she permanently lost feeling and function in her left hand after the attack at the dog owner's home in Santa Clarita. She is seeking punitive damages.

Jen Woodard, the director of the Dog Psychology Center, said in a statement that Millan never had contact with the dog and never trained the animal.

She said the dog's owner had removed the pit bull "against the strong advice and objection of his trainer." After the attack, the pit bull was returned to this center where it was placed in quarantine, Woodard said.

This is not the first time the training facility has been at the center of a lawsuit against Millan.

In 2006, a television producer sued Millan and claimed his dog was injured after being suffocated by a choke collar and forced to run on a treadmill at the training facility.

But this time Millan and his center are being accused of negligence for prematurely releasing a pit bull with a known history of attacking people and other animals.

The canine, named Gus, was seized and impounded in Texas in 2013 and was found to be a danger to the public and ordered destroyed, according to the complaint.

"Thereafter, Cesar Millan and his Dog Psychology Center, agreed to take over custody and control of the pit bull and not to release it until it was "fully deemed a safe member of society," the complaint said.

"When the dog's owner fell behind on monthly payments to keep it housed at the Dog Psychology Center, the center prematurely released the known vicious and

dangerous pit bull back into the public domain and entrusted it to someone with no training or experience in the handling of vicious and dangerous dogs," the complaint said.

Attorneys also contend that the director and head trainer at the Dog Psychology Center acknowledged that the pit bull was "not ready to be released to a home environment" and needed an additional 18 months of rehabilitation.