

Albemarle Co. Police Department Investigating K-9 After Horse Attack

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AUGUSTA COUNTY, Va. (WVIR)

The Albemarle County Police Department is investigating one of its own K-9 officers after the dog allegedly attacked a colt while the dog and its handler were off-duty.

An Albemarle County police officer and her K-9 partner lived on Jerry Hatton's Deep Meadow Farm in Augusta County.

Hatton says the Albemarle County police officer, who lived on the Augusta County farm, was jogging on a path with her dog. When they got up to a pasture, the K-9 somehow got through the fence, lunged at the month-old colt, and attacked.

The dog ripped a gash in the horse's hindquarters. Hatton says the officer turned the dog's shock collar to its highest setting but the K-9 still wouldn't back off.

"He, evidently, attacked to kill. It wasn't just a warning," Hatton said.

The colt had to go through two-and-a-half hours of surgery with more than 50 stitches to repair the wound.

The horse comes from a long line of grand champion Rocky Mountain Show Horses.

"He's a 10. He's probably the best one we've ever had," Hatton said. "He just looked so good we thought maybe we'd just keep him for a stallion replacement and a show horse since his dad's retired."

Hatton's high hopes for the colt he calls Thomas Jefferson were ripped away when he got a phone call from his wife, Mary, November 7.

"This dog had attacked the colt. I didn't realize the damage on the phone until I got here," Hatton said.

Albemarle County police say they're treating this incident the same way they would if it involved a human officer.

"We have an internal, administrative investigation that's going on so we can make sure that the policies and procedures were followed," said Madeline Curott with the Albemarle County Police Department.

Police won't confirm whether the dog is still in service.

"Our dogs go through extensive training with their handlers, so we're definitely not going to put a dog out on the street that is a threat to the public," Curott said.

Hatton worries the damage will prevent the colt from living up to its champion potential.

"It's made a big trauma on me, so I know there's a trauma on this horse. I don't know he'll ever get over with it, he'll ever be able to show, he'll ever be able to ride," Hatton said.

Hatton says Albemarle County has offered to pay the vet bills however, he believes the county should take responsibility for the loss in value if the colt can't become a show horse. He says he could be out tens of thousands of dollars.

The Augusta County Sheriff's Office Animal Control is also investigating the attack.

