

Pocket Pet Parents: Beware of Raccoon Attacks!

I'm Lucia, your neighbor on Del Oak Way. I wanted to share with you two terrifying, and potentially deadly, events that occurred last month in our own backyard. **If you have pets, please read this!**

My husband, Dennis, and I have two dogs...Toodle, a Terrier-Poodle mix (25 lbs) and Berkeley, a Terrier- Maltese mix (14 lbs). In early July, I was out of town and Dennis let the dogs out in our backyard to "go potty" around midnight. They disappeared out of view, then suddenly both began barking hysterically. A second later, they came running out of the bushes, back toward Dennis. Chasing them at full speed was a large raccoon. He wanted blood! Toodle managed to get away, but our little pup, Berkeley, wasn't so lucky. The raccoon caught up with Berkeley within seconds, tackling and pinning him down on his back, going for his throat. Fortunately, Dennis was right there and quickly came to Berkeley's rescue. He had to kick the raccoon three times before it released Berkeley. It all happened so fast and the raccoon was not the least bit afraid of humans.

Berkeley had minor cuts on his pads, but was otherwise unharmed. He was terrified and spent the rest of the night in Dennis' lap. We thought this was the end of the raccoon. Not so.

Prior to Berkeley's attack, I had heard the pitter patter of animals on our roof several times. I turned on the flood lights and saw a pair of raccoons in our yard drinking from our pool. I love animals and thought they were harmless and even cute! I had no idea how aggressive, vicious and dangerous they are.

Following Berkeley's attack, we had been very fearful to let the dogs out after dark. But two weeks went by and there was no evidence the raccoon had returned. All seemed peaceful in the yard. Then I made a critical mistake and let the pups out again after dark. The exact same thing happened. Within seconds, the barking began, followed by a huge raccoon chasing my babies. This time the raccoon went after Toodle, jumping on his back with such swiftness and force, it happened before we could do anything to protect him. Toodle howled as the raccoon began biting and scratching him. I ran over to Toodle, reaching down to pull the raccoon off his back! The raccoon was so strong that I couldn't separate him. It was terrifying. I was screaming, Toodle was screaming. The raccoon was snarling and trying to kill my dog.

Suddenly Dennis appeared and, in an instant, picked up both Toodle and the attached raccoon, throwing them into the pool. This finally separated them. The raccoon swam away, climbed out of the pool, and disappeared into the night. I grabbed Toodle out of the pool. He was seriously injured, with multiple bloody bites and scratches all over his body. We rushed him to the ER at Mueller Pet Hospital on Freeport (a wonderful, caring place). They shaved and cleaned his wounds, and

gave him antibiotics and pain meds. The raccoon almost bit off the tip of Toodle's penis (ouch), so he had to have stitches.

Since these two incidences, I have learned so much more about raccoons. They are deadly. They can kill a dog as big as a Labrador, and their primary M.O. is drowning their victims. We were so fortunate the raccoon swam away that night, rather than taking Toodle down in the pool. Dennis and I are also lucky we still have all our fingers. Apparently raccoons are known for taking off human digits. I never should have reached down to grab the animal, but I couldn't let him kill my dog without fighting back.

Both Toodle and Berkeley are doing well now. No sign of the raccoons since the last attack, but we're researching where to buy live traps and how to capture them ourselves. I spoke with a "raccoon expert" who told me the Pocket Area was full of raccoons and other predators that come out after dark. The biggest reason is because people leave pet food in their yards that attracts wild animals. Also, we have lots of trees and foliage in our community. This makes a perfect hiding place for mother raccoons as they teach their young how to forage for food.

Please watch out for your pets...dogs and cats alike. If you have any thoughts or questions, feel free to call me directly at 916.761.2505. Maybe together, we can come up with a solution that will keep our pets (and small children) safe. I love the Pocket and have lived here for 21 years. This is the first incident like this. My backyard was my sanctuary, but now I'm afraid to be out there after dark.