

19th June 2017

To whom it may concern.

I have been asked by Jan Smeaton to supply a supporting statement for her dog Sahara in regards to an alleged incident at 5 mile bay.

I have known Jan Smeaton and her dog Sahara since March of this year when Jan enlisted my services as a Behaviourist/Trainer. Jan was noticing that Sahara was starting to show some signs of anxiety when other people or dogs approached. After my initial assessment with Jan and Sahara I suggested the problem was stemming from Jan's own tension on the lead and that Sahara just needed clear direction and leadership and she would also benefit from socialising with other dogs.

I have been working with Jan and Sahara since then on a regular basis and they both join me at least 5 times a week on my group walks where we can have up to 8 dogs and their owners. These walks are all off leash either at the park or in the forest. Sahara and Jan have both gained confidence on these walks and Sahara has learnt to socialise and meet many people and dogs. We have also been doing weekly on lead walks through town to desensitize Sahara to even more environmental stimuli. Sahara has shown the odd signs of nervousness and anxiety but nothing out of the normal for a rescue dog. It was through this regular training that Jan has become more confident and assertive and Sahara more social towards other people and dogs.

We hadn't had any problems until a couple of weeks ago when I was asked to give feedback about a so called incident reported at 5 mile bay. I am surprised this incident has gone any further because as I told the Council's Animal Control officer, I did not see any attack. I was present when it is alleged that Sahara attacked another dog at 5 mile bay and here follows my account of the incident in question:

"We were on our usual group walk with 3 dogs in the bottom paddocks between 4 and 5 mile bay when a dog came bounding over from the walkway to play with my dog. They were running around crazy having a ball and then the owners called for their dog to come back so it came racing across the paddock, ran past Sahara who was sitting in the long grass then continued to jump over the blackberry and bushes towards its owners. It had gone about 10 metres passed Sahara (who is still sitting in the long grass) when it gave out a yelp then stopped and started crying and looking at its hind. I called it to come towards us (as we were closer than the owners), when it came to me I was able to have a closer look and found a small tear on its side. When the owners got to us I suggested they should either go to their vet to have it assessed or even repair the tear with superglue. No one at the time mentioned anything about what happened or that they thought that one of our dogs had attacked theirs, I assumed it had hurt itself while it was leaping through the bushes. As I have told the Council Inspector I am not able to say that Sahara bit the other dog because I didn't see Sahara make any move towards the dog as it passed her."

It's clear to me that there is insufficient evidence to even suggest that there was a dog attack at all.

As a result of this complaint Jan has told me that Council have now classified Sahara as a "Menacing dog for life" which seems overly harsh in this situation. I believe if any action needs to be taken at all she should be on a 60 day probation period and re-assessed after that time especially when this so called incident is her first.

To help Sahara through this probation period I will commit my time and energy to help with any training issues.

Lastly I would like to state that Jan is a dedicated dog owner and has fostered and cared for many dogs in her time. I respect anyone who can put the time, effort and commitment into caring for abused and unwanted animals.

To discuss this statement or any further information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards

MaryAnne Joyce



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June 20th, 2017

To: Taupo District Council
RE: Sahara (Staffordshire Cross)

To whom it may concern,

Jan Smeaton and Sahara graduated from our Basic Obedience Course last year. Since then she has continued to be enrolled in my Canine Good Citizenship Course.

Sahara is a rescue dog about 2 ½ to 3 years old. Initially Sahara displayed some insecurity, this being very common for rescue dogs with an unknown history. However, she made great strides and graduated from the Basic Obedience course.

To increase her socialization Jan has kept her enrolled in classes we offer.

Unfortunately Sahara suffered a cruciate ligament injury last October, which involved a very expensive surgery and extended recovery time. She had to be crated for 6 weeks. In my opinion this has set Sahara back some.

My understanding of the incident in question was that, this was not an attack but rather a reactive snap. A common reaction for an immature, insecure dog.

I do not believe that Sahara is a 'menacing' dog, though the initial use of a muzzle may be helpful in her training. I see that Jan is taking all the right steps to socialize Sahara and build up her confidence again.

By enrolling her in further training and exposure in our classes, I believe that Jan will help Sahara progress into a wonderful, loving, mature dog.

Please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'H. Jones'.

Howard Jones
President
Taupo Dog Training Club

To whom it may concern,

Three separate veterinarians, including myself, have seen Sahara, a three-year-old, tan Labrador-cross several times in the clinic over the last 18 months. In my experience, Sahara has always been a pleasure to deal with. She is easily handled and cooperates with her physical exam and is happy being in the clinic. We have individual enclosures in the dog ward, so, Sahara is not mixed with other dogs here; however, she is very well behaved in the ward and does not worry about the other animals.

Regards,



Rebecca Newth BVSc MVM
Vetora Taupo

21.6.17

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care saves lives

Taupo District Council
Great Lake Council Compliance Team

To Whom it may concern

I write in reference to Mrs Smeaton and her dog Sahara.

I have known Mrs Smeaton for 7 years. Whilst I was Operations Manager of the Taupo SPCA she joined the Dog Foster Team, which necessitates carers to be highly responsible and reliable, Jan more than met these requirements and showed immense care and consideration for her canine charges. It had always been such a pleasure to work alongside Jan and her husband Klaas as they are so reliable as well as innovative in their pet care.

Jan and her husband have been diligent, committed and responsible dogs owners for many years, they are fastidious when it comes to their dogs care, in providing for their physical and emotional needs.

Importantly, they understand that not everyone in the community are 'pet lovers' and they have always demonstrated consideration towards others in this regard.

The Taupo community is very fortunate that Jan and her husband have continued to donate their time and resources in the fostering and care for our communities abandoned and mistreated dogs for many years now, with wonderful results.

I understand Jan is currently working on the behavior training of their companion dog Sahara, you can be assured that she has impeccable integrity and will attend to her commitments diligently.

I am available for further comment if required.

Sincerely

Helen Rabinska
Operations Manager
CARE Trust

