

“Lawsuit: Edgemont Dog Mauled by Pit Bull at Kennel”

By Matt Bultman
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Dog Obedience Girl, LLC, d/b/a The D.O.G. Corrections & Clarifications April 30, 2012

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Text in bold in the left column is the subject of clarification, correction, or commentary in the right hand column.

| | Article | Corrections & Clarifications |
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| 1 | Lawsuit: Edgemont Dog Mauled by Pit Bull at Kennel | “Our hearts go out to Susan Kahn and her children on the tragic loss of their family dog, Coco,” Willard wrote in an email. “This tragic death occurred while their pet was in our care. We feel and intense sense of responsibility for what happened. We are terribly sorry that this occurred. In the coming days, we will make every effort to help the Kahn family deal with their grief and suffering. We have carefully studied what happened and have taken important steps to prevent something like this from ever happening again.” |
| 2 | Edgemont, N.Y. – An Edgemont woman’s Cockapoo was mauled to death by a pit bull while under the care of a dog training school, according to a complaint filed in state Supreme Court on Monday. | |

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| 3 | Susan Kahn sent her 6-year-old dog, Coco, to a Putnam Valley boarding and training facility for socialization lessons because the dog was terrified of other canines , the lawsuit said. | <p>Coco came to The D.O.G. for three weeks of Training Camp to address her “anxiety around other dogs”.</p> <p>We accomplish this by creating a safe and positive environment that fosters trust in the dog. As confidence improves we introduce the dog to small, supervised play groups with dogs that have a history of playing well.</p> <p>Over time, the dog’s sense of confidence increases and carries over to every facet of life, providing both the dog and those around a happier, less stressful life.</p> |
| 4 | At the facility, Coco was attacked by a pit bull mix nearly three times her size, ending in a horrific death for the small white pooch, Kahn’s lawyer Alan Sash said. | Coco and Ella (a <i>female</i> pit mix) were part of a small group of 4-5 dogs under the direct supervision of our Manager/Senior Trainer and another D.O.G. Counselor. After 15-20 minutes of playing well together, Coco became scared and growled at Ella. Ella responded immediately and attacked Coco. |
| 5 | “Coco died a horrible death in a manner that she was most afraid of – being mauled by another dog,” the lawsuit said. | Although this horrible event lasted only seconds before the dogs were separated, fatal damage was inflicted. |
| 6 | Kahn has filed a lawsuit against DOG Obedience Girl LLC, its owner, Joanne Willard and her husband Trevor, stating that their “reckless” and “negligent” actions led to the death of her dog. | |
| 7 | Joanne Willard told The Daily Greenburgh that she was very sorry about Coco’s death. | |

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| 8 | <p>“Our hearts go out to Susan Kahn and her children on the tragic loss of their family dog, Coco,” Willard wrote in an email. “This tragic death occurred while their pet was in our care. We feel and intense sense of responsibility for what happened. We are terribly sorry that this occurred. In the coming days, we will make every effort to help the Kahn family deal with their grief and suffering. We have carefully studied what happened and have taken important steps to prevent something like this from ever happening again.”</p> | |
| 9 | <p>Kahn’s lawyer said Kahn left Coco in the care of Willard on March 15, for a three-week, overnight training course at the former Woods End Kennel.</p> | |
| 10 | <p>Twelve days later, in an attempt to acclimate Coco to other dogs, Willard put the unleashed Cockapoo in a room with three other dogs, including a 40-pound pit bull mix, Sash said.</p> | <p>Coco and Ella were part of a small group of 4-5 dogs under the direct supervision of our Manager/Senior Trainer and another D.O.G. Counselor.</p> |
| 11 | <p>The training session turned deadly when the pit bull attacked Coco, sinking its teeth into her head, crushing her skull and causing traumatic brain injuries, the lawsuit said.</p> | <p>After 15-20 minutes of playing well together, Coco became scared and growled at Ella. Ella responded immediately and attacked Coco.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Coco was taken to a local animal hospital and later, at the request of Kahn, to the Animal Medical Center in Manhattan, but was not able to be saved. An autopsy showed the brain was injured so severely it stopped sending signals for Coco’s heart to beat, the complaint said.</p> | <p>Coco was immediately transported to Katonah Bedford Emergency Animal Hospital, “the most comprehensive advanced care veterinary hospital in Westchester County.” She was later transferred to the Animal Medical Center in Manhattan.</p> |
| 13 | <p>While Willard has refused to identify the dog that attacked Coco, Sash said the plaintiff was able to identify the pit bull through other sources.</p> | <p>On April 5 Susan Kahn and Joanne Willard had the opportunity to discuss Ella and the circumstances surrounding Coco’s death. At that time, Joanne herself disclosed Ella’s identity and the details of the following event.</p> |

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| 14 | <p>What they found was that the dog, named Ella, recently “jumped a fence and ran viciously into another person’s yard and bit a child,” the lawsuit said.</p> | <p>Ella was in the custody of her new owner at the time of this incident.</p> <p>The Putnam County Sheriff’s report states that, at about 3:45 PM on April 4, “dog jumped the homeowner’s fence, ran around youth’s birthday party. Dog, Ella, grabbed [child] by the left wrist with her mouth. Left marks, no skin broken.”</p> <p>Later, both the child and the father expressed that they believed Ella was “just playing.”</p> |
| 15 | <p>Sash said the pit bull was under the custody of Willard at the time of the attack, but was unsure if she was the official owner of the dog.</p> | <p>Ella’s original owner was in Philadelphia. She adopted Ella, but asked if we could help find a new home.</p> <p>Ella’s adoption paperwork indicates “no bite history”, “no problems with leash behavior, jumping, mouthing, shyness or other dogs”, and “Danger: No.”</p> <p>Ella was adopted locally and was in the possession of her new owner when this event occurred.</p> |
| 16 | <p>Kahn is seeking unspecified damages to recover the cost of Coco, her medical bills and attorney fees. But Sash said the suit is about more than money.</p> | <p>From the start, The D.O.G. accepted liability for all expenses incurred as part of this tragic incident, including associated travel costs.</p> <p>To date, The D.O.G. has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid a \$3,846.15 deposit for Coco’s care at Katonah Bedford Emergency Animal Hospital. • Issued a full refund for Coco’s deposit. • Offered to reimburse all other expenses related to Coco’s passing. |

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| 17 | <p>“She is looking to hold them accountable,” Sash said.</p> | <p>We are continually expressing our regret, sorrow, and responsibility for what happened to Coco. It is our hope that by demonstrating the lessons we have learned, and publically acknowledging the profound suffering we have caused the Kahn family, that at some point in the future perhaps they can share some level of forgiveness for what happened.</p> <p>In addition to taking responsibility for this tragic incident, we are reviewing all our operations to prevent a similar situation from happening again. These are the immediate steps we have taken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dogs of such different size and strength will always be kept separated. 2. Overall staffing has been increased and playgroups have been reduced to a 1:8 ratio. 3. Staff training has been increased and made more rigorous. 4. We are also employing for our staff a continuing education program in canine behavior and body language. 5. Dogs are now physically inspected more often and given additional care and attention. <p>Coco’s death has created a legacy of greater caution for all pets in our care.</p> |
| 18 | <p>Kahn issued a brief statement but declined to comment further on the case.</p> | <p>“Our hearts go out to Susan Kahn and her children on the tragic loss of their family dog, Coco,” Willard wrote in an email. “This tragic death occurred while their pet was in our care. We feel an intense sense of responsibility for what happened. We are terribly sorry that this occurred. In the coming days, we will make every effort to help the Kahn family deal with their grief and suffering. We have carefully studied what happened and have taken important steps to prevent something like this from ever happening again.”</p> |

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| 19 | “I hope that no one has to experience the needless and traumatic loss of a devoted family companion,” Kahn said through her public relations manager. | <p>We absolutely agree.</p> <p>Speaking for ourselves, we have taken responsibility from the first moment of this tragic event.</p> <p>We have sought and are seeking direct contact with the Kahn family to personally and directly express our condolences, answer any questions they may have, and to take whatever steps are necessary to help the Kahn’s through this tragedy.</p> |