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PRESS RELEASE

GJPD Officer Attacked by Pit Bull Dogs, Dog Owner Cited by Animal Services

(Grand Junction, CO) – A local man has been cited by Mesa County Animal Services on several counts, after his two pit bull dogs attacked a Grand Junction Police Officer this morning at Emerson Park, located at 316 S. 9th Street. Carl (a.k.a. Melvin) Thompson, age 56, a transient, was cited by Mesa County Animal Services for two counts of Dangerous Dog, two counts of Dog At-Large Fourth Offense or More, and two counts of No Proof of License. Thompson was also in violation of an existing court order from December 2006.

According to Animal Services Director Penny McCarty, Thompson was cited in December on the count of “Nuisance Dog” because his dogs were “at large and unconfined, on several instances.” McCarty says that he appeared in Grand Junction Municipal Court on the charges, but appealed to Mesa County Court. Judge Henderson agreed with the Municipal Court judge’s decision and, in a plea agreement, Thompson agreed to have his dogs spayed and neutered, kenneled, muzzled in public areas, and on a leash at all times. Those dogs included a male pit bull that was not present today and one of the female pit bulls that was present today.

Today’s incident began shortly after 8:00 a.m., when the officer responded to Emerson Park on a call of transients camping there. Upon arrival the officer approached the campers’ tent and was charged by two pit bull dogs. One dog bit the officer in the leg; the second dog lunged at the officer’s upper body. The officer responded by firing his service weapon twice; one round struck and killed one of the dogs. The officer was transported to Community Hospital for treatment of puncture wounds to his leg and was released.

Animal Services took possession of both adult dogs and multiple puppies in the tent. The surviving adult dog will be quarantined at Animal Services for 10 days, according to McCarty. After that time, the owner can pay a \$600 bond. If he chooses not to pay the bond, the dog will become the property of Animal Services unless otherwise ordered by the court.

The Grand Junction Police Department is writing an incident report and conducting a supervisory review of the officer’s use of force. The preliminary investigation indicates that because the officer was threatened and subsequently injured, his application of force was reasonable and within policy.

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