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**FENTON-AREA MAN SUSPECTS NEIGHBOR NABBED,
BEAT GERMAN SHEPHERD PUP : DOG HAD BEEN
TARGETED BY COMPLAINTS BECAUSE OF BARKING,
OWNER SAYS.(Jefferson County Post)**

Article from St Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) ; March 11, 1999 | Kohler, Jeremy | Copyright

What kind of person would abduct and beat a defenseless puppy?

That's what Gregg Jones is wondering after Dakota, his 9-month-old German shepherd, apparently was dragged away by a rope around his neck, beaten in the head and left in the woods several blocks from his Fenton-area home.

Dakota suffered a welt on his head, and his right eye was destroyed, Jones says, and probably will need surgery to repair the eye socket.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department is investigating the incident, including Jones' suspicion that one of his neighbors hurt Dakota.

Jones, 26, who lives on Frostwood Trail, says some of his neighbors recently complained about Dakota's barking. He says a man who lives near him approached him in November and warned him to do something about the barking because other neighbors were planning to poison the dog.

Another neighbor told him on Sunday that one particular car had driven in his neighborhood and turned around three times on Saturday night.

Jones, a construction worker, says he knows Dakota barks but the neighborhood is filled with loud dogs.

"I can understand someone being mad at him," Jones said. "But as for going out and beating him with a two-by-four or a stick - if someone had a problem with him they should have come beat on my door instead of taking it out on an innocent dog. At least I can defend myself."

Dakota disappeared Saturday night, while Jones was out with friends. Dakota was found by Dave Schwenk, who lives two blocks away. A rope wrapped around Dakota's neck was snagged around the tire of Schwenk's truck. Schwenk freed Dakota, wrapped him in a blanket and called for help. He eventually reached Jean Woolery, director of the Jefferson County Humane Society.

Dakota was taken to the all-night Animal Emergency Clinic in Kirkwood. Jones was identified as the owner because his telephone number was on Dakota's dog tag.

Jones returned home at 1:30 a.m. to several telephone messages from Woolery and others to let him know what happened. Dakota was released from the clinic Monday morning and slept much of the day. He was uncharacteristically limed when a visitor stopped by Monday afternoon.

"That's the first person I've ever seen him growl at when he came in the house," Jones said.

Jones says Dakota may have escaped from the yard but he thinks that would have been unlikely. He put a four-foot chain-link fence around his home so Dakota would have a place to play. And Dakota never before has tried to escape.

Woolery said that someone apparently tried to harm Dakota because of the rope found around his neck and because the head injuries were not consistent with being hit by a car and that no motorists reported hitting a dog that night.

"This is not fair to any animal," said Woolery. "He was in his own back yard. Someone put a rope around him and intended to do him bodily harm."