

Smiths Falls EMC

Regular walk ends in tragedy for dog owner

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BY STACEY ROY

EMC News - A local couple is fighting to have animal traps removed from the grounds of the Smiths Falls Golf and Country Club after a family dog was inhumanely killed recently.

Chris Colton took her dogs Mocha (mom) and Bailey back to the golf course in the afternoon Friday, Dec. 10. This was the second walk the group had at the course that day, as it was a favourite site. The dogs were enjoying their off-leash time when Mocha was attracted to the bush by what turned out to be the scent of a meat bone. Bailey quickly followed after, which was out of character for the three year-old dog.

"She stayed right on my heel," Colton said.

Colton heard a yelp and ran off the bridge near the 17th hole to find Bailey lying on the ground struggling to get a steel trap off her neck.

"I tried to get it off and she was just looking at me and choking. I could do nothing, I was helpless," Colton added. "She died looking at me and it was awful."

In desperation, Colton ran to the Pro Shop to get help, but it was too late for Bailey. However, she thanks the Pro Shop staff for coming to her aid during this time of tragedy.

"If I were by myself I don't know what I would have done," Colton said.

TRAPPING

As current members of the club, Chris and Hugh Colton were aware that live traps were approved for use on the property, but had no idea spring traps with sharp metal teeth were being placed within reach of dogs. The couple would like to see the traps removed from the property in the interest of safety.

"This can't happen again," Mrs. Colton said.

Unsubstantiated reports of harassment impacting course staff have been reported as a result of media coverage. The Coltons' goal is simply to avoid a similar tragedy from happening again and does not support these actions.

The club sees the traps as necessary to protecting their investment in the greens since new pesticide

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Submitted

Is a sign set up at the course after the unfortunate death took place. It warns owners to leash their dogs due to traps.

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Bailey had just become settled into her new home at the Coltons' Smiths Falls home when she was killed in an animal trap at the Smiths Falls Golf and Country Club.

regulations have limited their ability to control grubs and insects.

"The insects and grubs are more prevalent and because of that things like skunks and raccoons are coming onto the course," said Shane Kelford, vice president of the golf club. "It causes a significant amount of damage to the golf courses."

These animals are very active in the spring, but not this time of year, according to Jolanta Kowalski, spokesperson for the Ministry of Natural Resources. "No, they should be going into hibernation mode now," Kowalski added. "Most of them will be asleep by the end of December."

For this reason the Coltons question the setting of lethal traps on a golf course that is used by the public at a time when skunks and raccoons aren't likely to cause damage to property. They feel the club should consider returning to the live traps previously set on the property to control the damage.

A statement by the club notes that its trapping activity has recently been inspected by the Ministry of Natural Resources and found to be in compliance with regulations.

"The bottom line is the traps are still out there," Chris Colton said.

REQUEST

The Coltons feel Bailey's death was unnecessary and could have been avoided had clear signage been put up on the grounds warning users that kill traps were in use. The couple has asked that the golf course pay for Bailey's cremation. They have also asked to have the traps removed or have signs erected.

The Coltons confirmed this week the club has offered to cover the cremation and set up signage following a board meeting held Dec. 15.

"The new signs have been ordered and will be in place within a few days," reads the club statement. "In future, the signs will go up at the end of each golf season and remain in place until the start of the next golf season."

The number and location of these signs is still unknown. The Coltons would like to see signage at the entrance to the property and along the perimeter where residential homes abut.

During an interview with the EMC, Kelford said the club did seriously consider restricting access to the property after this incident despite their popularity with children, dog walkers, cross country skiers and snowmobile enthusiasts.

"We felt it would be a shame to stop people from doing that," Kelford said.

The club does encourage all dog owners to keep their pets on a leash when walking on the grounds.

The emotional turmoil this incident has caused the Smiths Falls family has taken its toll. Chris Colton said she couldn't eat or sleep for three days after Bailey's death and the separation has had its impact on Mocha, Bailey's mother.

"Mom and pup were always together," Colton said.

In memory of Bailey and in an effort to have some good come out this incident, the Coltons have requested the course host a fundraising tournament in support of LAWS, but this was not supported at the club's meeting last week.

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Hugh Colton holds the bucket the neck trap was held in. The trap clamped down on the dog's neck and suffocated Bailey over the course of minutes. The family wants the traps replaced with live traps.

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Bailey and her mom, Mocha (left) had never been apart until Bailey was killed in an animal trap at the Smiths Falls Golf and Country Club Dec. 10.



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