

Dog holds couple 'hostage' in home

By I. PERRIN WESTON

STAFF WRITER

A Boulder Creek woman said she was held hostage inside her home for more than two hours this morning by a growling, snapping Rottweiler while county animal controllers refused to send help.

Jean Halliday, of 14395 W. Park Ave., said the male dog appeared in her front yard at about 9 a.m., apparently attracted to her female dog. The animal, which Halliday said she'd seen before, began acting aggressively to the point that she and her husband, Keith, were scared to leave their house, so they called the County Animal Shelter for help.

A dispatcher told Halliday to try to tie the dog up, she said. They also refused to dispatch an animal controller to remove the dog, despite her telling them the dog was behaving aggressively.

"I can't get out of my yard," Halliday said during a 10 a.m. telephone conversation with a re-

porter. "The dog is snapping and growling at passersby. I'm afraid to leave my property. I have a gun and I've threatened to take the dog out if I have to."

By 11 a.m., the county animal shelter had finally dispatched an officer to the Halliday home, having upgraded the call to a top priority emergency. But not until after Halliday had contacted the sheriff's office and told them of her threat to kill the dog if someone didn't come to liberate her.

Also by then, Halliday's husband, Keith, had managed to get a rope around the dog's collar and restrain the 100-pound plus animal.

Halliday said the sheriff's office was very helpful, and that they made calls on her behalf to animal control. When animal control turned the sheriff's down, commenting to officers that Halliday was merely being "hysterical," they called Halliday to say they'd send a patrol officer to help contain the dog.

Halliday is angry by what she considers animal control's refusal to help.

However, County Animal Shelter administrators this morning said that Halliday had not indicated the animal was being aggressive when she called, and so they did not view it as a priority call.

"Dispatch indicated it was not a situation where the dog was behaving aggressively," said Poundmaster Jody Pateriti. "(Halliday) said it was a Rottweiler lying on the ground, not being aggressive. If we'd known it was being aggressive, it would have been a priority."

Pateriti suggested that there had been a "communications problem," that Halliday had not told them the dog was snapping at her and others.

"They're lying," said Halliday, when recontacted about Pateriti's

comments. "I told them I was scared, that the dog almost bit my husband. My husband was right there when I made the call."

Kat Brown, director of operations for the County Animal Shelter, said that after Halliday's call to the sheriff's department, the incident was upgraded to an emergency. Brown said she is investigating Halliday's call to dispatch to determine why there is such a discrepancy between Halliday's and the dispatcher's versions of what was said.

"It's in a gray area. It's a call about a dog hanging out in a front yard off leash," said Brown, explaining how dispatchers must interpret what is or is not an emergency.

When Halliday's call came in, the only available animal control officer was on another emergency call, Pateriti said.