

UR professor's dog could land on list of dangerous dogs

BY FRANK GREEN

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A brown and white, 4-year-old Australian shepherd escaped the 37th spot on Virginia's new Dangerous Dog Registry yesterday.

But Godiva isn't out of the doghouse yet.

Her owner, Sheila Carapico, a University of Richmond political science professor, must appear again in Richmond General District Court on Sept. 24, when it will be argued whether Godiva should be placed on the canine equivalent of the state's Sex Offender Registry.

The case was continued yesterday because the woman jogger bitten, or "nipped," by Godiva on July 5 in front of Carapico's home was not on hand to testify.

The online registry was created in the wake of a March 2005 incident in Spotsylvania in which Dorothy Sullivan, 82, and her small dog were fatally mauled by a neighbor's pit bulls.

The registry is searchable by locality or ZIP code. It lists several dogs in Chesterfield County, but none yet in Richmond or Henrico County. The dogs' photos are posted along with the owners' names and addresses.

Elaine Lidholm, spokeswoman for

Registry online

Virginia dog laws and regulations and the Dangerous Dog Registry can be found at:
www.vdacs.virginia.gov

the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, said the registry first went online on July 1, but the law took effect July 1, 2006, and the 36 dogs on the list have been added over the course of a year and not just the last couple of months.

Lidholm said a dog declared "dangerous" by a court is not the same as one that has killed or seriously injured a human or another pet and has been declared "vicious." Dogs declared vicious are put down, she said.

In most cases, dogs deemed dangerous have attacked and injured a person or another pet, Lidholm said. Such proceedings are typically initiated by animal-control officers after receiving complaints or after an incident has taken place.

Richmond Animal Control Officer Keegan Merrick told Judge David Eugene Cheek yesterday that the July 5 bite by Godiva was the second reported to authorities. He said it was



The case against Godiva was continued to Sept. 24.

decided not to pursue dangerous dog status for Godiva after the first bite because the incident took place in Carapico's yard.

Cheek, who noted he had once been bitten while jogging and did not report it, said not all incidents warrant dogs to be declared dangerous. But, he said, "I don't know what happened in this situation. I don't know. That's something we'll have to find out."

Carapico said after yesterday's hearing that the first person "nipped" was a friend who sought medical attention several days later and the clinic reported it.

The second incident occurred as a thunderstorm approached and Godiva escaped under the backyard fence of the Byrd Park-area home and

headed for the front door.

It was then a female jogger was bitten. The victim was not seriously injured, but she called police, said Carapico, adding, "she was frightened and upset, and I don't blame her at all."

But, Carapico said, "this dog is not going to maul someone to death. She's just going to nip and then back off. Right now, she's in doggie boot camp."

Her lawyer, Susan A. Kessler, said authorities need to exercise more discretion when seeking to have a dog declared dangerous. If the owner of every dog who nipped or bit someone was brought to court, the system would be swamped, she complained.

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