



CENTRETON -- Lydia Tomasi, 16, played with Duke in this family photo. Duke, a six-year-old golden retriever, was killed on April 11 after he was wounded by a neighbour and put down by an OPP officer for humane reasons. Submitted photo

Family's golden retriever shot on neighbour's property

Shooter says dog's death was accidental

CENTRETON -- Duke was always there, every day, waiting for Lydia Tomasi when she stepped off the school bus.

But now, the 16 year old from Centreton gets off the bus and there are no more licks from the golden retriever she has

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Centreton family laments killing of beloved family dog

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On April 11, Duke wandered onto a neighbour's property and was shot, although the homeowner says it was an accident. The homeowner felt threatened by the dog, said Northumberland County OPP.

"This golden retriever had in the past been loose on this property," said OPP Constable Steve Bates. "The dog could usually be scared off, but in this case, the owner claims the dog was baring his teeth and refusing to leave."

Const. Bates said the property owner fired a shotgun into the ground near the dog to "scare it off," but the bullet ricocheted and hit the dog in the stomach. Duke ran off, but was later found by an OPP officer in a ditch nearby, and the officer humanely put Duke down.

The man who fired the gun said he's been sick over what happened.

"It was an unfortunate accident. I feel terrible about what happened," Chris Calnan said. "I didn't just walk out and shoot the dog. I just wanted to scare it off."

Const. Bates said Mr. Calnan legally owned the shotgun, and "shot the gun in a rural area. It was not done in a careless manner. He was well within his rights to defend his family and home."

"The dog owner's liability act says it's on the owner of a dog to make sure a dog stays on your own property," Const. Bates said. "It is unfortunate though what happened. (Mr. Calnan) should have called



CENTRETON -- Lydia Tomasi, 16, with Duke in a family photo. Duke, a six-year-old golden retriever, was killed on April 11 after he was wounded by a neighbour and was later put down. Submitted photo

the police or humane society first though." Mr. Calnan claims his family has been "bothered constantly" over the last year by big dogs in the area, and his young son and wife had become scared of big dogs.

"I don't know if it's because my lab is in heat or not, but this dog did not want to leave when I tried to shoo it away," Mr. Calnan explained. "I'm a dog lover. I wouldn't have a dog if that weren't the case. I never

meant to kill the dog. We didn't know whose dog it was or where it's been or if it had rabies. I am just tired of dogs scaring my family."

Duke, according to Mr. Calnan, "didn't look like he had a vicious bone in his body," but said he did what he felt was right to defend his family.

"I just feel awful about it," he said. "I wish it never happened."

But no matter how remorseful Mr. Calnan is, it's no consolation to Lydia and her family.

"Duke has never shown his teeth before," Lydia said. "He's not vicious at all. I was closest with Duke. I'd walk him and at night he'd sleep in my bed. It's all I think about, it's all I talk about."

The Tomasi family's two other dogs miss Duke as well. One of them won't eat and the other won't stop crying. The family had rescued all three of the dogs.

"Duke had a good heart. He was clingy, but not dangerous," Lydia said. "I would take him to retirement homes to visit the seniors. They all loved him."

Police called staff from Hamilton Township's Shelter of Hope animal shelter to recover Duke's body and arrange for cremation.

Shelter manager Elizabeth McKinlay said to her knowledge, it's rare to hear of dogs being shot while wandering on someone's property.

"But we do get calls and incidents where we do deal with aggressive dogs every year," she said.

Although the Tomasi family said there had been no complaints filed with the shelter over Duke or either of the other two dogs the family owns, Ms. McKinlay could not confirm that.

"I haven't seen the file, so I am unaware if that is the case," she said.

Ms. McKinlay said if anyone encounters a strange dog on their property, they should go inside and call the shelter.

"That's why we are here. To deal with those types of situations," she said.

With Duke's collar in hand, Lydia said it's been "different" not having Duke at home.

"Nothing can be said or done to bring my dog back," Lydia said. "I just want people to know he was a kind dog that didn't deserve what happened."

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