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Witness blames Concord police in dog's shooting

By Maricella Miranda
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CONCORD - Lucas Tracey buried his pit bull Lucky this week, saying goodbye to a loyal and obedient friend who was shot and killed by Concord police.

"I am devastated," Tracey said Thursday.

Tracey, 22, questions why police didn't use Mace or a Taser gun to control Lucky, who officers say charged them. He said he is considering legal action.

Lucky was unleashed, along with two other pit bulls, Rio and Timber, on Tuesday afternoon in Newhall Park.

Rio's owner, Michelle Reyna, 38, her daughter, and her niece, Rosalinda Reyna, were with the dogs. Rosalinda Reyna, 24, was watching Lucky and Timber, who belong to Tracey, her boyfriend.

The women were helping Michelle Reyna's daughter with a high school essay on stereotypical perceptions of "dangerous" animals by watching people's reactions to the pit bulls, both leashed and unleashed.

Two police officers went to the park after receiving a complaint about the animals. They told the women to control the dogs, according to a police statement issued after the shooting.

Police did not return phone calls Thursday.

Rosalinda Reyna said she was putting a leash on Lucky when police yelled at them. Rio and Timber, who were not leashed, ran toward the officers, but turned around startled after officers started shooting at them, she said. Lucky followed, pulling the leash out of her hand.

He was shot as he turned to run away, Rosalinda Reyna said.

Photos taken of Lucky after he died show that he was hit in the back of the head and in the stomach. The other dogs were not hit.

The official police statement said officers began shooting at the dogs because they were

barking, growling and charging toward them.

"The police are lying," Rosalinda Reyna said. "They are making Lucky be someone who he's not."

Tracey added, "There was no way that Lucky would ever harm a fly."

Tracey cried Thursday in an interview at Michelle Reyna's house as he showed photos of Lucky, a large black dog, part pit bull and part Labrador.

As he spoke, Rio and Timber played together, barking and chasing after a cat. The dogs barked and growled at an unfamiliar photographer.

The women say Timber is "just a barker," but harmless. They said they know the dogs should have been leashed, but that police began shooting without warning.

"They put our lives in danger because they were scared," Rosalinda Reyna said.

Contra Costa Animal Services took custody of Timber and Rio and later released them to their owners. Both women were cited for having Rio and Timber unleashed in a leash-required area.

"I'm so glad that I have Rio," Michelle said. "I'll never unleash her again."

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EAST BAY ROUNDUP

Concord

Officer shoots, kills pit bull on loose

Police officers responding to a complaint about three unleashed pit bulls shot and killed one when the animal charged them, police said Wednesday.

Officers saw the dogs loose about 2 p.m. Tuesday near the Vietnam Memorial in Newhall Park on Newhall Parkway, according to a news release issued by Concord police. Officers told three women with the dogs, including their owner and a custodian, to control the animals.

Two pit bulls ran toward the officers, barking and growling, the release said. Officers repeatedly yelled to the women to control the dogs, but the dogs continued running.

An officer started shooting at the two dogs. Neither dog was struck and one was controlled, but the other continued to charge, forcing an officer to shoot and kill it, the police release said.

After the shooting, the third dog was released to its owner, said Contra Costa Animal Services Lt. Joe DeCosta. The surviving dogs are under investigation to determine if they should be deemed dangerous or potentially dangerous.

DeCosta said the shooting was "a direct result of the owner's irresponsibility. They put their animals in harm's way."

-- Maricella Miranda