

# Felonious Minneapolis feline runs afoul of the law

By SARAH LEMAGIE, Star Tribune

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You don't want to mess with Hoppy.

A pet that has twice raced out from its south Minneapolis yard to attack passing dogs and their owners was returned home Tuesday after Animal Care and Control impounded it for the second time in two years.

Hoppy is a cat.

Reports of cats attacking dogs in Minneapolis are rare, and last week Hoppy became one of just two cats currently labeled "potentially dangerous," said Dan Niziolek, manager of Minneapolis Animal Care and Control. By contrast, the city has a list of about 140 dogs that have been declared a threat.

The felonious feline ran afoul of the law in fall 2007, when a man walking his dog said he was charged by a large black cat in the 3900 block of Drew Avenue South. The man, Thomas Buchberger, reported that he fell to the ground and was bitten and scratched several times before Hoppy let up. Buchberger's dog, Walden, ran to the safety of the middle of the street.

The city impounded Hoppy, an adult male, and ordered him destroyed, but his owner, 82-year-old Leo Noltimier, got the ruling overturned, according to city records.

Then, last month, Hoppy did it again, according to the city. A second victim, Russ King, told the city he was walking his dog, a Maltese named Charlie, past the same house on the evening of May 20 when a cat matching Hoppy's description pounced. When King scooped up Charlie to get the dog out of harm's way, the cat scratched King instead.

When Animal Control came looking for Hoppy after that attack, Noltimier refused to hand over his pet, prompting city workers to get a search warrant for the cat.

Calls to Noltimier's house were not answered Tuesday evening.

Hoppy was taken into custody earlier this month and held for several days, Niziolek said. He was released Tuesday on several conditions. Hoppy has been microchipped and given a rabies shot. Noltimier must register the cat with the city each year. When outside, the cat must wear a harness with a leash held by an adult, and he must be kenneled or shut in a room when visitors

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are in the house. If Hoppy acts up again -- and "hopefully it won't," Niziolek said -- the city could order him destroyed.

Last year, the city had 268 cases of animals that were declared a threat or ordered destroyed, Niziolek said. Just one was a cat.

The only other "potentially dangerous" cat, Ralph, lives on the 4000 block of Beard Avenue S., Niziolek said. Ralph also attacked a dog.

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