

## Residents rally for justice after dog's death during animal control call



Dozens descended on Aurora Town Hall on Saturday rallying for justice following the death of a dog during an animal control call in East Gwillimbury.

Last week, photos and video of a rottweiler called Heiniu lying on the pavement with blood appearing to have come out of its mouth, sparked a wave of anger, calls to action, and questions many say remain unanswered.

The Town can confirm that Animal Services responded to a call involving two dogs at large on May 4 in East Gwillimbury, said the Town of Aurora in a statement. During efforts to safely secure one of the dogs, an officer sustained a bite injury requiring medical attention. Due to escalating safety concerns and the presence of bystanders, Animal Service Officers contacted York Regional police for assistance.

Throughout the incident, staff attempted to safely call, care for, and secure the dog while protecting public safety. The dog later became medically unresponsive and transported to a veterinary clinic. This was a difficult and upsetting incident for everyone involved, including staff, witnesses, and the owners. The Town is reviewing the incident and a full investigation is underway.

Among those calling for both answers and justice is Holland Landing resident Michelle Sanders, who attended the rally with Heiniu's family.

Sanders says she and her daughter corralled the two dogs running at large outside their home and ultimately called Animal Control.

It's a call she says she's come to regret.

She says that, in her observation, Heiniu was not aggressive, but became distressed as Animal Control officers struggled to get him in the vehicle with catch poles.

It was in her driveway that Heiniu passed and each day since the May 4 incident she has been praying for rain to help wash the remaining blood from her driveway.

It's been beyond overwhelming, says Sanders of both the incident and the mounting calls for answers since details were first shared through the Humane Initiative. We are the absolute biggest animal-loving family you'll ever meet [and] this is the worst possible thing that could happen to my family in my driveway.

?I still have blood on my driveway. I have to relive this every single day of my life ? every moment, every time I walk my dogs past that spot, it's been so overwhelmingly painful that there's days I don't know what to do with myself. I have to bend over and literally try to breathe properly because I don't know what to do. I work from home and I pray for days that it's raining just so I don't have to walk my dogs and I don't have to walk outside. I'm praying for rain to help clean some of this blood off the driveway because there was so much and the smell was so strong. I was just trying to help them and do the right thing.?

Sanders stresses the movement that has resulted from the incident is not about her, but the quest for truth and justice for Heiniu and his humans, and to ensure similar cases don't happen in the future.

?At the end of the day, that beautiful dog died on my driveway and I have to live with that. Some days I don't know how to get past this, but I do know I will fight and continue to fight to spread awareness,? she says. ?I don't want the negativity. I don't want their lives threatened. That does not bring enjoyment to me. I want [those responsible] to be held accountable for their actions.?

For more on animal control in East Gwillimbury, visit [www.eastgwillimbury.ca/en/government/animal-control.aspx](http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/en/government/animal-control.aspx).

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