

John J. Malm & Associates Secures \$300,000 Settlement for Woman Injured in Dog Park Attack Involving Unrestrained Pit Bull

Naperville, Illinois – John J. Malm & Associates announced today that the firm has secured a \$300,000 out-of-court settlement on behalf of an Illinois woman who was seriously injured during an unprovoked pit bull attack at a public dog park. The incident occurred after the defendant, who was watching and exercising the pit bull for his mother-in-law, allowed the animal off leash despite clear signs of aggression. The attack left the plaintiff with hand injuries requiring surgical intervention, permanent scarring, and ongoing limitations affecting her dominant hand.

According to witness accounts, the plaintiff had been playing fetch with her own dog at the Montrose Beach dog park, located on the lakefront in Chicago, when the defendant arrived with the pit bull he was supervising. Almost immediately, the pit bull began lunging and snapping at other dogs. Concerned about the escalating behavior, the plaintiff attempted to move away. As she was doing so, the defendant released the pit bull from its leash. Once unleashed, the dog charged directly toward the plaintiff and her dog and initiated an attack. After the plaintiff separated the animals, the pit bull lunged again and bit her on the hand.

The plaintiff sought emergency treatment for the injury. Before she left the scene, the defendant provided his phone number, only to later deny responsibility when contacted by authorities, claiming he was merely a “good Samaritan” who happened to be present. It was not until a lawsuit was filed and evidence was presented that he finally acknowledged that he was, in fact, the person in control of the pit bull during the attack.

“Dog owners and anyone temporarily responsible for a dog must take responsibility, not only for controlling the animal but for being truthful when someone has been harmed,” said Chicago dog bite attorney, Jason Schneider, of John J. Malm & Associates. “Our client did nothing wrong. She was supervising her pet in a designated dog park when an aggressive, unleashed pit bull was allowed to run freely. We are pleased to have reached a result that holds the responsible party accountable for the harm caused.”

Case Overview and Investigation

The firm conducted a thorough investigation into the circumstances of the attack and the defendant’s initial denial of responsibility. A witness statement confirmed the pit bull’s aggressive behavior even before being released from the leash. Medical records documented the nature of the bite injury, the emergency treatment, and the nerve repair surgery performed on the plaintiff’s dominant hand.

Attorneys at John J. Malm & Associates obtained photographs of the injuries, park conditions, and communications between the plaintiff and the defendant. This evidence established that the

defendant was the individual exercising custody and control over the pit bull, making him responsible under the Illinois Animal Control Act.

Injury, Treatment, and Long-Term Impact

The plaintiff suffered lacerations to her right hand and pinky finger, including a nerve injury requiring surgical repair. Before surgery, the exposed nerve caused extreme pain upon contact, and her physicians advised there remains a risk she may never regain full sensation in the finger. She now has permanent scarring on her dominant hand and continues to experience fatigue and discomfort when gripping or carrying objects for extended periods. These long-term limitations and the trauma of the attack were central to the settlement negotiations.

Liability and Legal Issues

Under the Illinois Animal Control Act, liability applies not only to dog owners but also to any person who has custody or control of a dog at the time it causes injury. Here, the defendant brought the pit bull to the park, handled the leash, and made the decision to release the animal despite its aggressive behavior.

His initial refusal to acknowledge his role added complexity to the case and required additional investigative efforts. Ultimately, witness accounts, medical documentation, and communications tying him to the pit bull established his responsibility.

The firm evaluated both economic losses, emergency medical care, surgery, rehabilitation, and non-economic losses including permanent scarring, emotional distress, pain and suffering, and loss of normal life.

Why Some Defendants Deny Responsibility After a Dog Attack

An incident like this one highlights a pattern sometimes seen in serious dog bite cases. When confronted with an unexpected and violent attack, the individual responsible for the dog's behavior may experience fear, embarrassment, or panic, emotions that can lead them to deny involvement or minimize what occurred. Psychologists note that denial is a common defense mechanism triggered when a person feels overwhelmed by guilt or anticipates legal or financial consequences. Some dog owners or handlers fear repercussions ranging from civil liability to the possibility that the dog may be removed from the home or even euthanized, which can further motivate denial. In dog bite cases, especially those involving powerful breeds like pit bulls, this may lead to attempts to shift blame, deny control of the dog, or claim that the incident never happened.

"In this case, the defendant even misled the responding animal control investigator, claiming that he did not own a dog and did not have a dog at the park that day. When we see these behaviors, we know exactly how to respond. Our litigation team knows how to confront these situations with facts and to ensure that the truth is brought forward and accountability is established," – Illinois pit bull injury attorney, John J. Malm.

Damages Recovered Through Settlement

The \$300,000 settlement reflects the seriousness of the plaintiff's injuries, the permanence of her scarring and nerve damage, and the defendant's clear responsibility under Illinois law.

Settlement negotiations included medical records, surgical reports, witness accounts, photographs, and documentation of the plaintiff's ongoing functional limitations.

"Our goal is always to ensure that victims of dog attacks are fully compensated for both the visible injuries and the long-term consequences they must live with," said Illinois dog bite lawyer,

John J. Malm. "This case shows how quickly an uncontrolled pit bull can cause life-altering harm. We are proud to have secured a result that will assist our client with medical costs, future care needs, and the permanent effects of this preventable attack."

Safety and Prevention and Dog Parks

John J. Malm & Associates emphasizes that safe and responsible handling of dogs, whether owned, borrowed, or temporarily supervised, is essential in shared community spaces. Dog parks require heightened attention to behavior, leash policies, and truthful reporting.

"When an individual chooses to take a dog into a public space, the responsibility to control that animal is absolute," said Malm. "Honesty, accountability, and compliance with safety rules are essential to preventing serious injuries."

John J. Malm & Associates is an Illinois personal injury firm that serves clients throughout the Chicagoland area and its western suburbs with offices in Naperville and St. Charles. Our top-rated personal injury lawyers represent injured victims of automobile accidents, medical malpractice, product liability, work injuries, nursing home abuse and neglect, dog attacks, slip & fall/premises liability, wrongful death, and other accident and injury claims.

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