

Owner of killer dog **fin**ed RM2,000

> Bull terrier 'Beacon' still in custody of veterinary dept undergoing evaluation

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PETALING JAYA: The owner of a bull terrier that killed a 74-year-old man last month was fined RM2,000 in default two months' jail by the magistrate's court here yesterday.

Accountant Elaine Soon Sien Ling, 28, had admitted to being negligent by leaving her guard dog named "Beacon" unsupervised, and posing a danger to Yip Sun Wah.

The dog had attacked Yip who had just turned 74 that month, and bit him on the neck as he was out jogging along Jalan SS19/5B, Subang Jaya at about 9.40am on May 8. Yip died at the scene.

Investigations revealed that the dog was not caged or chained prior to the attack.

Magistrate Mohd Nazri Omran, in imposing the RM2,000 fine, took into consideration the fact that the victim's family had forgiven Soon and had withdrawn their police report on the incident.

The charge, under section 289 of the Penal Code, carries a maximum six-month jail term or RM2,000 fine or both.

In mitigation, Soon said she adopted Beacon after her home was robbed and that the dog had received vaccinations and undergone the necessary medical checks prior to that.

She said the dog was usually left in her house compound in the morning and placed in its cage in the afternoon.

"I regret the incident and have asked for forgiveness from them (victim's family) and they have forgiven us (Soon and her family) and withdrawn their police report," said Soon.

She presented a letter from the victim's family stating their

forgiveness, to the court.

Soon said on the day of the incident, she had closed the gate as she left for work.

She said the rubbish bin placement area door was also closed but it may have been left unlatched after the rubbish was picked up by the garbage collector.

Deputy public prosecutor Siti Fatimah Yahya had urged the court to impose a deterrent sentence not only to serve as a lesson to the accused but also to the public to avoid a similar incident from happening again.

Meanwhile, Beacon is still under the custody of the Selangor Veterinary Department undergoing evaluation.

Animal rights activists say that the punishment meted out to the owner was too light.

Malaysian Animal Rights and Welfare Society president, N. Surendran said:

"The fine is too light as this case involves the death of a person as a result of the owner's negligence."

He said the RM2,000 fine does not serve as a deterrent for other dog owners.

Malaysian Dogs Deserve Better founder Wani Muthiah said the bull terrier owner should have been punished accordingly but that nothing much could be done as RM2,000 was the maximum fine.

"It would be unfair if we have to send the owner to jail. She was



(Above) Elaine Soon Sien Ling, owner of the bull terrier which killed a 74-year-old jogger. (inset) Beacon the bull terrier is taken away by Subang Jaya Municipal Council officers just after the incident.

negligent but not a criminal," said Wani.

She urged dog owners to exercise more care.

"In Yip's case, the dog managed to escape from its home. Now that it

involves a death, the poor dog is also the victim," Wani said, adding that Yip's case is still a "big mystery" as no one really knows what happened that day and what provoked the dog to attack.