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Goat rancher shoots and kills one suspected killer dog; Dog owner identified



This is a photo of the dog that Richard Esseck had to kill while it was continuing to kill goats on Essecks' ranch. The owner of the dog has been located, as has another dog suspected of killing livestock.

This photo was provided by Richard Esseck. He also provided photos of two more of the goats that were killed, but those are too graphic to be shared.

Photo by Richard Esseck

By Jeff M. Hardison © Dec. 22, 2017 at 4:57 p.m.

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GILCHRIST COUNTY -- Killer dogs ended the lives of four more goats and wounded two other goats in Gilchrist County, but goat rancher Richard Esseck was able to shoot and kill one dog suspected of being a killer before it escaped on Friday morning (Dec. 22).

The other members of that pack did escape from the killing field that they created that day.

Esseck, a 78-year-old goat rancher lives with his wife Leslie Esseck, 68, in Gilchrist County, where they have owned Lazycat Farm for 16 years now, having started that agricultural entity in 2001, after he retired from his job at Citrus Memorial Hospital at the age of 62.

This event Friday is just over a month after a Nov. 5 attack and killing of other goats on their property by loose dogs.

Roaming dogs coming onto their property and killing livestock has been happening year, after year, after year now.

In a Saturday evening email (Dec. 23), Esseck provided more information about his need to take the life of a dog.

It was about 2 a.m. on Friday (Dec. 22), he wrote when the killer dogs that attacked his herd of goats on Nov. 5 returned.

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"I located two dead goats with my flashlight," he wrote, "but as the noise subsided I went back inside to wait for daylight.

"I returned at dawn, with Leslie, and she spotted a dog tearing a goat apart, still alive," he continued. "I tracked it to the rear of my property in the fenced goat compound, where I found another dog with it in some palmettos. They ran when they saw me, and I was able to shoot the slower one."

Esseck noted that an officer with Gilchrist County Animal Control was able to identify the dog. That investigator went to the owner's house and picked up another dog that Esseck was able to identify.

Since attack on Nov. 5, Esseck said, Animal Control has worked hard to locate these dogs, but without identification on animals it is close to impossible to locate them.

"We were lucky this time as Animal Control has had a previous complaint with this animal," Esseck said.

The dog he killed had a harness on it. The attacks on his goats were they were killed and maimed can't be blame these strays or coyotes, he said.

"I believe most attacks on pets and livestock are caused by neighborhood dogs, living pretty near the spot of attack," Esseck said. "In my case, the animals were about a quarter mile north of me on the same street. However as I had never seen these dogs, identification would have been impossible had there not been a previous complaint."

With the most recent loss from the herd, the Essecks' herd is down to a dozen goats now.

REDUCING THE PROBLEM

Animal control officers in Gilchrist County need to have more tools available for their use, Esseck has said.

Esseck said the dog he shot and killed on Friday morning was wearing a harness. He hopes to find the owner so that he can seek compensation for the loss of his animals, and for the loss of his and his wife's peace of mind.

Gilchrist County has animal control ordinances. In the many pages of definitions and rules, the ordinance notes that "Dangerous dog means any dog, that according to the records of the division and/or any other law enforcement agency of the county has:

(1) Aggressively bitten, attacked or endangered, or has inflicted severe injury on a human being on public or private property;

(2) Has more than once injured or killed a domestic animal while off the owner's property;

(3) Has, when unprovoked, chased or approached a person upon private property or the streets, sidewalks or any public grounds in a menacing fashion or apparent attitude of attack, provided that such actions are attested to in a sworn statement by one or more persons and dutifully investigated by the appropriate authority; or

(4) Has been used primarily or in part for the purpose of dog fighting or is a dog trained for dog fighting."

Esseck said one change he sees as being needed in that part of the ordinance is "more than once." That means the dog would have to be proved to have done it once, even if it was caught in the act a second time to be deemed a "dangerous dog."

TO SEE THE PREVIOUS STORY (Exclusive to HardisonInk.com) FROM NOVEMBER CONCERNING THE PRIOR ATTACK CLICK [HERE](#).