

Missing pit bull wasn't at animal shelter, city says

But paperwork shows otherwise

By Jody Callahan

Friday, July 1, 2011

Something shady is going on at the Memphis Animal Shelter.

That's the opinion of Brooke Shoup, who believes the shelter has mishandled -- or worse -- her 11-year-old pit bull Kapone, who was picked up last Friday afternoon after escaping from the family's Cordova home.

"Oh, absolutely, just because of the (trouble) I've had," Shoup said at a press conference Thursday afternoon announcing a \$1,000 reward for the return of Kapone, an 11-year-old pit bull she raised from a pup. "I don't feel like they're putting enough effort into this. I feel like I'm being shoved under the rug."

City officials contend, however, that Kapone never made it to the animal shelter, despite paperwork indicating he did.

"An extensive review of all shelter records, including a security video log, leads us to believe that Kapone was never sheltered there," according to the statement from Public Services Director Janet Hooks, who oversees the shelter.

The situation began last Friday when Kapone and Jersey, a 3-year-old pit bull, escaped from the family's Cordova backyard.

Although the dogs have collars and tags, they weren't wearing them because they often come off as the pair play, Shoup said.

An animal control officer picked up the dogs, so Shoup was at the shelter early Saturday morning to pay the fines and collect her pets.

Jersey was there, but there was no sign of Kapone, even though he also was noted on Jersey's kennel card, indicating they arrived together.

Shoup called the city attorney Thursday, hoping to get video from the facility to see if it reveals Kapone's fate. Jill Madajczyk, a city attorney, said they are working on the request.

Except for medical reasons, all dogs brought to the shelter are supposed to be kept for 72 hours for owner reclamation or adoption.

Shoup holds out hope that Kapone was either accidentally adopted out or even illegally sold.

Allegations have repeatedly been made that pit bulls are being illegally sold out from the shelter, possibly for breeding or fighting.

"I have heard that rumor for years, since 2003. I think it's true," said Donna Velez, with the Hearts of Gold Pit Rescue group. "Somebody, in that building that works there, knows what happened to that dog."

City officials said that any employee caught violating shelter policies faces discipline.

"All potential violations of our policy and procedures are currently being reviewed and, if appropriate, could lead to discipline and/or termination of the employee involved in this case," according to Hooks's statement.

A distraught Shoup, with her husband and daughter at her side Thursday afternoon, pleaded for her dog's return.

"I've had him since I was 15. He was our first child," she said, in tears. "He was such a good dog. He really, really was."

-- *Jody Callahan: (901) 529-6531*

Reward for Kapone

The Shoup family is offering a \$1,000 reward, no questions asked, for Kapone's safe return.

Anyone with information is asked to call the "Senior B Safe" hotline, operated by CrimeStoppers. That number is (901) 528-0699.

