

Lawyer: Fatal Dog-Stab Self-Defense

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A Middle Island man charged yesterday with animal cruelty had no choice but to stab his dog to death after the 80-pound pit bull attacked him and his 8-year-old son, the man's lawyer said.

But police say Lamont Yarborough had only a scratch on his hand from the dog and could have fled from it without killing it.

Yarborough, 36, of 51 Wilson Ave., did not want Buster, 2, to die, said attorney Michael Brown of Central Islip.

"This dog has had extremely vicious tendencies in the past," Brown said. "In the heat of the moment, he was trying to control the dog. ... He certainly had no intent to kill the dog."

Yarborough called police at about 5 a.m. yesterday after stabbing Buster to death, said Det. Sgt. James Madden of the Sixth Precinct. Police found the dog's body in a hallway with puncture wounds to the groin, head and rib cage, he said.

Yarborough, a driver for a private ambulance company, told police he grabbed a knife from the kitchen after Buster attacked him in a bedroom, then poked at him under a bed, Madden said.

Killing the dog was unnecessary, Madden said, noting Yarborough had a "superficial" scratch mark on one hand.

"Mr. Yarborough had plenty of time to retreat" after Buster attacked him, Madden said. "I believe Mr. Yarborough could have confined his dog in a room and ... he could have called 911."

Yarborough pleaded not guilty in First District Court in Central Islip to felony aggravated cruelty to animals. If convicted, he faces up to 2 years in prison. He was released without bail and is due to return to court March 5.

A necropsy on the dog will likely be completed today, said Jerry Lauber, chief of detectives at the Suffolk Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Arielle Brechisci contributed to this story.