Wild dogs upsetting rural residents

By Timothy Beacham
Staff Writer

CATALOUHA — Wild dogs running amok in St. Martin Parish are upsetting local residents.

Michelle Champagne, who lives near here, said that wild or stray dogs have been plaguing her family and others in the area for years.

“I want the parish to have an animal control system and a dog catcher instead of leaving the problem for us to deal with,” said Champagne.

According to her, the latest incident occurred last week when a collar-less Labrador retriever pounced upon her cocker spaniel, Bobby.

“The lab showed up here two weeks ago and has decided to adopt us as his family,” said Champagne. “Last week it grabbed my spaniel and shook him like rag until my husband had to kick the dog off of him.”

Champagne said that she has called the sheriff on numerous occasions seeking help.

“The sheriff’s department told us to shoot the dogs if we could prove that they were strays, but I refuse to shoot them,” she said.

The Advertiser made several attempts to contact Sheriff Charles Fusilier regarding the shooting of the strays but he was unavailable for comment.

Alina Schexnider, who has since moved from the area, said that she was attacked two years ago by dogs while mowing the lawn.

“Three of them came at me while I was on the riding lawn mower,” she said.

“They barked and nipped at me while circling the mower. When I made it to the porch to get my son, they kept coming so my husband shot them.”

Schexnider said that the parish made no effort to help control the problem.

Longtime resident Patsy Theriot said that the problem is nothing new.

“We’ve been here 25 years and get about 30-40 strays in per year,” said Theriot. “Most of them are wild and run in packs through the woods.

“When you have small children around it can be dangerous for them,” she said.

Parish Administrator Jerry Durand agrees that there is a problem but said that nothing will be done about it for now.

“This has been an ongoing problem for the 16 years that I have been here,” said Durand. “We have property that we could use as a site for an animal control center but the cost of maintaining it would be too high for the parish to sustain.”

Durand said that until a revenue package could be put together to support such a facility, it would have to wait.

“With an election coming up, I don’t see a millage increase being implemented for this project until the new administration comes in,” he said.

Champagne has another idea.

“I’m not going to shut up about this until something is done,” she said. “I want something done about these dogs before someone really gets hurt.”