Rampaging rooster attacks girl

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By KELLEY BENHAM

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TARPON SPRINGS -- When they heard the screams, no one suspected the rooster.

Dechardonae Gaines, 2, was toddling down the sidewalk Monday lugging her Easy Bake Oven when she became the victim in one of the weirder animal attack cases police can recall.

In the cluster of beige houses at Lime Street and Safford Avenue where Dechardonae lives, man and chicken have coexisted peacefully for years in quiet defiance of city ordinance.

That ended Monday afternoon, when authorities apprehended the offending rooster, named Rockadoodle Two, and its sister, named Hen. Hen was not involved in the attack, police said.

The rooster struck around noon as Dechardonae ventured from her house in the middle of the cluster to visit her Uncle Tony, waiting in the driveway. It's a short walk, even if you're 3 feet tall and carrying a toy oven.

Tony Kramer, 44, heard the little girl shrieking, spun around, and saw the rooster.

Rockadoodle Two had knocked the 27-pound girl flat on her belly and was pummeling her with beak, claws and blue-black wings.

"He was beating the crap out of her," said her mother, Lori Current, 27. "A freaking rooster, you know?"

Kramer ran for the girl, snatched her up by one arm and chased the bird off, waving his arms and shouting, "Oooh, get! Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!"

The man and the girl had taken about three steps when the rooster attacked again, knocking the screaming girl to the grass a second time.
Kramer swatted at the rooster, backhanded, and it shuffled off.

He could not pick the girl up because he has a bad hip, he said, so he took his niece by the hand and headed for her mother's house.

But Rockadoodle Two flew at the girl a third time, latched onto her narrow shoulders and hammered at her face from behind.

Kramer knocked the rooster down, but it didn't run away this time. It glared at him.

So he kicked it.

The bird flew to a porch nearby, still staring. It puffed its chest and ruffled its feathers.

"He just sat there, all bold," Current said.

"That chicken was not scared," Kramer said.

The neighborhood has never had any chicken trouble beyond the usual scratching and crowing, Kramer said.

Everybody there knew Rockadoodle Two. Neighbors described the rooster as a normally well-behaved bird from a good family. Its father, Rockadoodle, and mother, one-legged Henny Penny, lived in the neighborhood until their deaths by pit bull and heat stroke, respectively.

Everyone knows Dechardonae too. She travels door-to-door in her too-big flip flops chatting with neighbors. She used to pet Rockadoodle Two when it was a chick.

Kramer raised Rockadoodle Two's father. He did not own the son, but thought well of the bird until this, he said.

"I had known him since he was an egg," Kramer said.

That did not matter to Current when she called authorities.

The call surprised police, she said.

A chicken? they asked.

"Come and get him now," she told them. "I am not going to rest."

Hen was captured easily, but Rockadoodle Two led six people on a chase. They flushed the bird out from under a house with a cane fishing pole. But the rooster dodged the Humane Society officer's net, eluded a couple of flying grabs, shucked and bobbed and skittered through the sandspurs and weeds. Finally, the officer tackled him.

"This was no scrawny rooster," Current said.
Rockadoodle and Hen were taken to the Humane Society of North Pinellas, said executive director Rick Chaboudy. From there, they were sent for rehabilitation in Odessa, probably permanently, he said.

This is the city's first rooster attack in recent memory, said Tarpon Springs Police Sgt. Jeffrey Young.

"It does not appear to be epidemic," he said.

But keeping chickens in city neighborhoods is illegal, although police did not cite any residents in this case.

Rockadoodle is the second Tarpon Springs rooster to make news in recent months. This year, a woman battling cancer befriended a stray rooster named Roosty and declared the bird her guardian angel.

The city told the woman the rooster had to go, and the controversy died only when Roosty did. It was killed by a raccoon in August.

Police were unaware of the chickens in Dechardonae's neighborhood, but residents there say the birds are scattered in back yards all over town.

"This right here is why we have those kinds of ordinances, so 2-year-olds can walk down the driveway safely," Young said.

Dechardonae was shaken after the attack but is recovering fine. Her scratches are almost gone; her right eye is barely puffy.

She hid in the house after the attack but said chickens don't worry her now.

"He gone," she said of the rooster. "The police got him."

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