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Top Investigators Act After Stray Dogs Attack Boy

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Two stray dogs walking on the frozen Moscow Canal in 2008. **Igor Tabakov**

The days of thousands of stray dogs may be numbered after an attack on a 6-year-old boy caught the attention of top investigators Wednesday.

Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said his agency has personally taken control of the investigation into the attack of four stray dogs on the boy in a Magadan region village.

The dogs pounced on the boy as he walked past them Tuesday and inflicted serious injuries before several adult bystanders managed to pull him to safety, Markin said. The boy was hospitalized in serious condition and has undergone surgery.

"It is disturbing that such incidents regularly occur in different regions of the country," Markin said in a statement. "More and more children are victimized by dog attacks that cause irreparable injuries and often kill them."

He said the Magadan branch of the Investigative Committee has removed materials about the attack from the local police and would oversee the investigation.

Strays are a common sight on the streets of Moscow and other cities across the country, and visiting foreigners have voiced concern about being bitten.

Markin said a 10-year-old boy was attacked and killed by a pack of stray dogs as he was returning home on the night of Feb. 28 in a village in the Krasnoyarsk region. He said villagers repeatedly had appealed to local authorities to round up strays before the attack occurred.

In another case, a 7-year-old boy was badly mauled by strays in the city of Arkhangelsk on March 7. He died on the way to the hospital.

On March 26, a 3-year-old child died from neck wounds suffered in an attack by guard dogs protecting the territory of the Astrakhanovsky farm near the city of Blagoveshchensk in the Amur region.

"To prevent the repeat of such tragedies, the Investigative Committee is appealing to municipal authorities, who are responsible for ensuring public safety in populated areas, to get to work," Markin said.

He also said legislation was needed to address the problem.

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