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More dog laws urged following child's death

LONDON (AP) Lawmakers called Monday for tighter controls on dogs after a 7-year-old boy was killed by a crossbreed mastiff.

Dean Parker died from severe head and neck injuries after he was attacked Sunday while building a snowman near his house in Middlesbrough, 190 km north of London.

Witnesses said the dog, who was being walked by two other boys, appeared friendly at first, playing and leaping at the snowman.

But Cleveland police Inspector Michael Sedlatschek said the 2-year-old dog named Kujo went out of control.

Paul Sanderland, who was taking care of the dog for its owners, said the dog had been on a leash but pulled away from his sons Gareth, 10, and Craig, 7, while they were walking it in the park.

"I never thought Kujo would behave like that. He is a family pet who gets knocked about by all the kids and has never so much as growled at them," Sanderland said.

Labor Party lawmaker Graham Allen called Monday for a review of dangerous dogs legislation.

"This tragic incident underlines the gaping holes that we have long identified in the dangerous dogs legislation," Allen said. "It would appear from early reports that this particular breed may not

even be listed as a dangerous dog."

The Dangerous Dogs Act was enacted in July 1991 following attacks by pit bull terriers and other canines, including one on a 6-year-old girl who spent 10 days in intensive care.

The law requires owners of American Pit Bull Terriers, and other breeds of fighting dogs, including Japanese Tosas, Fila Braziliere and Dogo Argentinos, to be muzzled and on a leash in public.

The breeds must be neutered, registered with police and owners must carry insurance for their dogs. Violations carry fines of up to £5,000 (\$7,500) and possible prison sentences.

Conservative Party lawmaker Roger Gale asked the government to consider compulsory third party insurance for all dogs.

But Lou Leather, chairman of the Pet Advisory Committee, an animal welfare campaign group, said powerful dogs should not be exercised by children.

"There may well be a case for amending the law to prohibit small children from taking charge of a large dog," Leather said, adding that it is the "dog owner who is at fault in these cases, not the dog themselves."

Police said they were holding the dog while the investigation continued.