

Enhance home security with canine protection

In many homes and security installations today, a dog is more than a companion as it is the first line of defence at home and even in some offices.

BY GEOFFRYEY OYET OKWERA

The recent murder of Pamela Tumwebaze, a Director of Students Affairs at Uganda Christian University (UCU), following the infiltration of a killer into her home, has sent shockwaves through her neighbourhood and beyond. The tragic incident has reignited concerns about the safety of residents, vulnerability of private homes, even in seemingly secure settings.

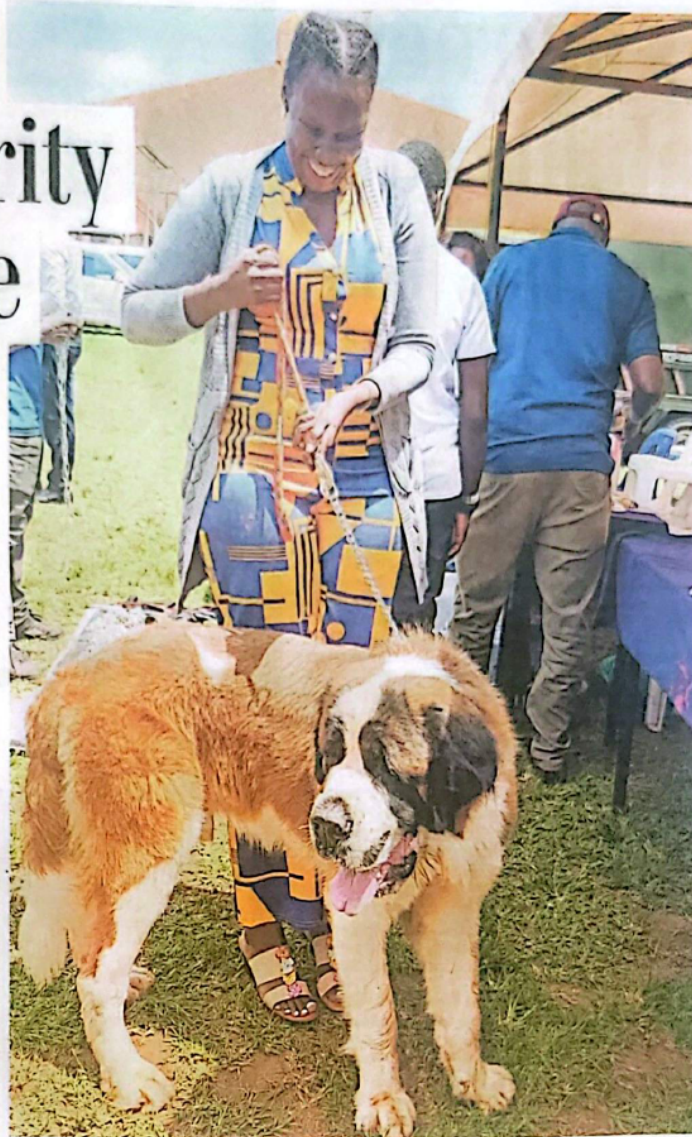
Many Ugandan homeowners often associate gated properties with guaranteed protection, believing that controlled access points and perimeter fencing offer sufficient security. However, this incident has demonstrated that such environments are not immune to criminal infiltration. Physical barriers alone, without layered security systems and community vigilance, may provide only a false sense of safety.

Barely a week later, in Kulambi, a Kampala suburb, suspected gangs attempted to break into a residential property. Their plan was foiled by the swift response of the Uganda Police Force, following timely information from alert area residents. The coordinated effort prevented what could have been another distressing tragedy, underscoring the importance of community-police collaboration.

In another disturbing development, popular TikToker Diana Namulinde, widely known as Diana Skyz or Rich Wife, was reportedly murdered in a suspected robbery. She was found dead in her apartment in Kwaata Zone, Kyanja Ward, Kawempe Division, an incident that has further heightened anxiety among urban dwellers about apartment security and personal safety.

These incidents paint a troubling picture of evolving criminal tactics that target both standalone homes and apartments. They also highlight critical gaps in residential security systems, including inadequate surveillance, poor vetting of domestic workers or service providers, limited neighbourhood coordination, and delayed emergency response mechanisms.

Renewed discussions have ensued about the need for heightened vigilance, improved neighbourhood coordination, and stronger collaboration with security agencies. While gated communities provide an added layer of protection, experts emphasize that security is most effective when residents



In many homes and security installations today, a dog is more than a companion as it is the first line of defence at home and even in some offices. PHOTO/GEOFFRYEY OYET OKWERA.

remain alert, invest in additional measures such as; use of security dogs. CCTV surveillance, alarm systems among others.

Dogs as alternative measure

Apart from the common burglary risks such as; weak gates, porous perimeter walls, and houses located in isolated or open areas, dogs continue to offer supplementary layer of security protection. They provide early warning by barking and alerting homeowners in the presence of intruders, often deterring potential criminals before they attempt to break in.

In many homes and security installations today, a dog is more than a companion as it is the first line of defence at home and even in some offices.

From gated residences to warehouses, farms and private security firms, dogs play a critical role in protection, detection, and deterrence. Yet while their value is widely recognised, the financial risk associated with their health is often overlooked.

Dog insurance in the offing

Mercy Mellisa Achen observes that the expense of maintaining a dog discourages many homeowners, making dog insurance a valuable alternative.

"Dog insurance protects homeowners from sudden financial strain. Instead of

choosing between their security and finances, insurance ensures timely access to quality veterinary care," she says.

Achen notes that security dogs, particularly highly alert and specially trained breeds, are considered working assets due to the rigorous training they undergo to assist in patrols, detection, tracking, and crime prevention operations, often in high-risk environments.

"These dogs face occupational hazards such as injuries during operations, stress-related conditions, and exposure to harmful substances," Achen adds.

Achen says dog insurance helps safeguard this investment by covering veterinary medical expenses, replacement costs in case of loss or permanent disability and public liability in situations where a dog may inadvertently cause injury or property damage while on duty.

With rising concerns about safety in residential areas, Achen emphasizes that insuring security dogs is not just about pet care, but also about strengthening overall home and corporate security resilience.

The Uganda national Institute of Public Health, estimates over 700,000 owned dogs, with about 13 percent of households keeping them, primarily for security rather than companionship.

Daudi Mugabi, the Statewide Insur-

ance (SWICO) corporate affairs manager, urges Ugandans to consider dog insurance as part of their broader security strategy, especially amid the rising concerns of crime across the country.

Dog insurance is designed to help owners manage unexpected financial exposure arising from illness, injury, or loss of an insured dog.

Mugabi notes that dog insurance in Uganda was developed in line with the country's regulatory framework, reflecting international best practices while being adapted to suit local conditions. This ensures that policyholders receive protection tailored to the realities of the Ugandan market.

He says dogs are professionally trained for security services and are widely used by private security firms, factories, warehouses, and gated communities. In many of these settings, dogs represent significant financial investment and functional value.

"In many of these settings, dogs represent significant financial and functional value, yet they remain completely uninsured. Home owners need to prioritise the inclusion of dogs as security measures and take great care through insuring them," reiterates Mugabi.

Mugabi adds that insuring security dogs not only safeguards the financial investment made in acquiring and training them, but also guarantees timely access to quality veterinary care in case of illness, injury, or unexpected incidents.

Some of the insurance plans for the dogs include; accidental injuries, illness-related treatment, veterinary consultations and diagnostics, surgery and hospitalisation, prescribed medication among others.

Some Ugandans also do not know that dogs play different roles and not all are suited to play the security role in homes. While some are kept as pets, there are those that are specifically earmarked for security purposes.

Herbert Ogwang a dog trainer with Uganda Police under the Dog section department says the German Shepherd, Rottweiler are the most ideal for security at home. But he says for effectiveness, home owners should feed the dogs on recommended schedules like; morning, afternoon and evening.

"These German Shepherds have a longer lifespan, spanning up to 17 years yet they are also loyal compared to the others," says Ogwang.

Increased demand for dogs

The growing wave of insecurity across urban centres has significantly increased the demand for dogs, especially in residential areas.

David Luyimbazi, a dog breeder in Kansaanga, observes that more residents are now appreciating dogs as an added layer of home security.

"There is a clear upward trend in the number of Ugandans who value dog not just as pets, but as an important part of home protection. Many now see them as the first line of defence," Luyimbazi explains.

He adds that beyond individual homeowners, several private security companies are also purchasing trained dogs to reinforce protection at high-profile residences and VIP homes.

"Some security organisations from us and deploy these dogs at homes and other sensitive premises. The demand keeps increasing because people want reliable, responsive," he says.

According to dog breeders, the shift reflects a broader mindset change as dogs are increasingly regarded as companions and strategic security assets.

Popular.
There is a clear upward trend in the number of Ugandans who value dogs not just as pets, but as an important part of home protection. Many now see them as the first line of defence.
David Luyimbazi, a dog breeder in Kansaanga.