

“IT WAS NEVER ABOUT THE MONEY”: Pet parents fought for change after police shot and killed their dog

Loveland, Colorado - Herkimer was just 14 months old when a Loveland police officer shot him in 2019. His family described him as sweet and affectionate. Four days later, after he was left paralyzed from his injuries, they made the devastating decision to have him euthanized.

Nearly seven years later, Herkimer's family has reached a \$675,000 settlement with the city of Loveland, along with changes to how police officers are trained to handle encounters with dogs.

The shooting happened on June 29th, 2019. Herkimer's pet parents, Wendy Love and Jay Hamm, had stopped in the parking lot of a Loveland business while making firewood deliveries. According to their lawsuit, they were repairing a box and giving their dogs water when the business owner saw their truck on surveillance video and called police to report possible trespassing.

Loveland Police Officer Mathew Grashorn arrived first. Body-camera footage shows one of the couple's dogs, Bubba, moving toward Grashorn before returning when called. Herkimer then came out of the truck and approached the officer. Grashorn fired twice.

The city has maintained that Herkimer did not respond to commands and charged the officer. Love and Hamm disputed that account, saying Herkimer was not behaving aggressively. Grashorn reportedly said afterward that he had no way of knowing whether Herkimer was friendly and was not willing to risk being bitten.

Herkimer survived the initial shooting, but he was paralyzed. Four days later, his family had him euthanized because of his injuries. Loveland police later conducted an internal review and determined that the shooting was justified and did not violate department policy.

Love and Hamm did not accept that as the final word. They filed a federal civil-rights lawsuit, arguing that the shooting amounted to an unreasonable seizure under the Fourth Amendment. Grashorn sought qualified immunity, but a federal judge declined to end the case in his favor.

In April 2025, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld that decision. The appeals court did not make a final finding that Grashorn was liable, but it ruled that a jury could reasonably find Herkimer presented no immediate danger, that the officer had time to respond differently and that nonlethal alternatives may have been available.

The case was headed toward trial when the two sides reached a settlement. Loveland agreed to pay Love and Hamm \$675,000. The city also agreed to update its dog-encounter policy and training practices, including requiring officers to receive dog-interaction training every three years instead of relying only on the one-time training required under Colorado law.

The city did not admit wrongdoing and has continued to maintain that Herkimer charged the officer. Love and Hamm, however, have said the lawsuit was never simply about a payout. “It

was never about the money,” Love said. Their goal was to push for change and prevent another family from going through the same kind of loss.

Nearly seven years after Herkimer was shot, his family cannot bring him back. What they did accomplish was a substantial settlement, changes to police policy, recurring officer training and a federal appellate ruling that could have significance in future cases involving police encounters with family pets.

For once, there was a measurable result after a family refused to let the death of their dog disappear into an internal finding that the shooting was justified.

VERIFIED CONTACT INFORMATION

We respectfully need to focus on on **Loveland Police leadership and the City Council**, because the settlement is already done. The ask now is to make sure the promised policy and training changes are fully implemented and maintained.

Loveland Police Department

Chief Tim Doran

970-962-9579

Tim.Doran@cityofloveland.org

Loveland City Council

Mayor and all City Council members

970-962-2199

ccouncil@cityofloveland.org

City of Loveland

Main line: 970-962-2000

SAMPLE EMAIL

Subject: Please honor Herkimer’s legacy and fully implement dog-encounter training

Dear Chief Doran and Loveland City Council,

I am writing regarding Herkimer, the 14-month-old dog who was shot by a Loveland police officer in 2019 and later euthanized because of his injuries.

Nearly seven years later, Herkimer's family reached a \$675,000 settlement with the city that also includes changes to Loveland Police Department dog-encounter policy and recurring officer training.

I respectfully ask that the city fully implement those reforms, ensure officers continue receiving meaningful dog-interaction training every three years, and make the department's updated dog-encounter policies publicly available whenever possible.

Herkimer's family has said this case was never simply about money. Their goal was to help prevent another family from experiencing the same loss.

Please honor that effort by making sure the promised changes become lasting practice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

SAMPLE PHONE CALL / VOICEMAIL

"Hello, my name is [name], and I'm calling about Herkimer, the 14-month-old dog who was shot by a Loveland police officer in 2019 and later euthanized because of his injuries.

I understand the city has now reached a \$675,000 settlement with Herkimer's family and agreed to changes involving dog-encounter policy and recurring officer training.

I'm respectfully asking Loveland to fully implement those changes, make sure officers continue receiving meaningful dog-interaction training, and do everything possible to prevent another family from experiencing what Herkimer's family went through.

This is about making sure Herkimer's case leads to lasting change. Thank you."

One note for your followers: emails sent to Loveland City Council can generally become public records under Colorado law, so people should not include private personal information they would not want disclosed.



IT WAS NEVER ABOUT **THE MONEY**

Nearly 7 years later, Herkimer's case brings change

Loveland, Colorado



OFFICER MATHEW GRASHORN



HERKIMER WITH WENDY LOVE AND JAY HAMM



\$675,000 SETTLEMENT

FAMILY SAYS THEIR FIGHT WAS ABOUT CHANGE

CITY AGREES TO UPDATE DOG-ENCOUNTER POLICY AND TRAINING

Shot in 2019. Change in 2026.

THEREALPAULMUELLER.ORG

Fair use. Bodycam, court, and news records.

