**Dog saves boy from cougar**

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Austin Forman was hauling firewood in his backyard on the weekend - one of the 11-year-old's weekly chores - when his golden retriever, Angel, began acting strange.

"He thought that was kind of cool, she was following him around," the boy's father, Jay Forman, recalled yesterday from his home in Boston Bar, B.C., a rural community about 200 kilometres northeast of Vancouver.

It was already dark on Saturday evening and Austin had little time to react when he discovered the reason for Angel's strange behaviour. The boy spotted what he first thought was a strange dog emerge from the shadows. Just two metres away, the cat charged at him. "He was like, aw, crap, it's a cougar."

But Angel was ready - the young dog leapt at the hungry cougar and "took the whack," Mr. Forman said. The boy escaped inside his home while the two animals battled for several minutes. "The cougar was latched onto her head, you could hear both the dog and the cougar screaming. Then it went silent."

RCMP Constable Chad Gravelle was less than a minute away from the home when he got an emergency call about a cougar mauling and a child. In the small community, he knows the Forman kids and arrived fearing the worst.

"When I found it was the dog, I was relieved," he said.

He stepped into the backyard and saw the cougar, a young and skinny-looking female, had dragged Angel under the porch. He climbed down and got close enough to put a killing shot through the cougar's head.

"We brought it out on the snow, the dog was laying there lifeless," he said. As the family gathered, consoling Austin, the dog suddenly sprang up. "She coughed a bit of blood, she started wagging her tail, snuggled up to Austin and licked him."

His son is shaken but unhurt, and Angel is expected to recover.