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Dog owner must pay \$14,000 for libelling breeder

BY CHERYL CORNACCHIA, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE JULY 28, 2009

An Ontario woman has been ordered to pay \$14,000 after a judge found she had libelled a West Quebec commercial dog breeder online.

Ontario Superior Court Judge Michael Galligan heard last week that Lorie Gordon of Brockville made the comments about the poor health of her black Labrador retrievers on an Internet pet forum.

The judge ordered Gordon to pay \$10,000 in damages

and \$4,000 in court costs to James, Charlene and Nicole Labombard, the owners of the Shawville-based Paws R Us Kennel.

Galligan ruled the comments Gordon posted online between July 2004 and April 2005 at www.pets.ca and other popular pet websites were defamatory.

But Gordon said on Monday she will appeal the decision with the help of donations from animal-rights advocates. "I wrote they had sick dogs, which is true," she said.

Luc Barrick, the Ottawa lawyer representing the Labombards, said Gordon and several other witnesses, including representatives from Montreal's SPCA, attempted to portray Paws R Us as a puppy mill.

"They are trying to say a commercial breeder is a puppy mill and they are not," Barrick said. "There are puppy mills out there, but my client is not one of them."

Marko Kulik, one of the owners of the Montreal-based website www.pets.ca, where Gordon posted the online comments, said he was shocked by the decision.

"I feel bad for her," said Kulik.

"I don't know if she was right or wrong, but all she wanted to do was to prevent others from having the same experience."

Gordon's posts about the two dogs she got from Paws R Us -- a black Labrador retriever that had to be put down because of severe

hip dysplasia and a replacement dog that was diagnosed with epilepsy -- generated hundreds of comments on www.pets.ca before they were removed, he said.

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