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Puppy sellers convicted of animal cruelty

Digby County woman tells judge 'decision is ludicrous'

By BRIAN MEDEL Yarmouth Bureau
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DIGBY — A Digby County puppy seller convicted of animal cruelty and assault Thursday launched into a tirade against the judge who handed down the decision.

"I find you guilty," Judge Jean-Louis Batiot said to Gail Benoit, 39, as she stood beside her husband, Dana Bailey.

Mr. Bailey, 46, was also convicted of animal cruelty in Digby provincial court Thursday.

"I think that your decision is . . . ludicrous," Ms. Benoit shot back at the judge before denouncing her treatment.

Judge Batiot told her to take it up with her lawyer, raising his voice to be heard.

The lawyer for the couple, Michael Power of Bridgewater, was unable to attend court because of poor weather.

Ms. Benoit and Mr. Bailey were tried last year on charges of animal cruelty stemming from the seizure of 10 puppies from their Roxville home in October

SPCA special constable Nancy Noel, seen with her colleague Roger Joyce outside Digby provincial court on Thursday, says Gail Benoit threw a puppy at her, stepped on her foot and shoulder-checked her in 2007. (Brian Medel / Yarmouth Bureau)



Gail Benoit and her husband, Dana Bailey, are to be sentenced March 26. (Brian Medel / Yarmouth Bureau)

2007.

Ms. Benoit was also charged with assaulting SPCA investigator Nancy Noel while the dogs were being taken during the execution of a search warrant. Ms. Benoit was convicted on that charge Thursday.

Outside court, Ms. Noel, an SPCA special constable, said she was at the couple's home in 2007 when Ms. Benoit suddenly chucked a puppy at her.

"She threw the puppy at me, then she stepped on my foot and shoulder-checked me," Ms. Noel said.

The couple operates a business, Puppies R' Us, that is listed on a government website as a partnership involved in the retail sale and delivery of puppies.

The address of the couple's blue bungalow is the same address given for the puppy company.

Some people have complained to the SPCA about puppies they have purchased from Ms. Benoit. Some of the young dogs died soon after.

Judge Batiot did not read his written decision publicly Thursday but made sure the couple received a copy.

They are expected to be sentenced March 26.

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As Judge Batiot announced his decision, Ms. Benoit seemed to have a hard time accepting her fate.

"This is going to be all over the Internet," she said, interrupting the judge.

Ms. Benoit also brought a couple of letter-sized sheets of paper and waved them toward the judge.

"This has got to stop," she said, reading "wanted . . . dead or alive" from one of the pieces of paper that appeared to be a mock wanted poster of Ms. Benoit.

When the judge told her to talk to her lawyer about it, she turned on her heel and left with her husband.

"Pay no mind to 'em. . . . Keep going. Keep going," Mr. Bailey said as his wife continued to spout off.

"Everybody beware. The SPCA are corrupt," she warned courtroom observers.

"Yeah, they're crooks," added Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Bailey also indicated he was not interested in returning to court.

"There will be no sentence date," he said loud enough to be heard in the public gallery as they left in a huff.

Roger Joyce, another SPCA investigator in court Thursday, said his organization will push to ban the couple from owning or keeping animals.

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