

[NEWS](#) > [CLASSIFIEDS](#) > [SERVICES](#) > [ARCHIVES](#) > [JOBSPRESS](#) > [WHEELSPRESS](#) > [MYCONNECT](#)

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 Today's News

 Last 7 Days

 Web

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[Contests](#) | [Lotteries](#) | [Horoscopes](#) | [Comics](#) | [Tides](#) | [Bookmark Us](#)

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Lawyer: No such breed as pit bull

By JIM MacDONALD

GUYSBOROUGH — Dog owners Marilyn and Willard Cameron have unleashed a lawyer to attack the credibility of legislation that could exile their family pet.

The couple went on trial Wednesday on charges of having a fierce or dangerous dog — Zeus, a 14-year-old pooch that the Municipality of the District of Guysborough says is a pit bull.

Municipal council banned the breed in 1995, which defence lawyer David Green said he finds curious since the breed does not technically exist.

"There's no standard by which they could judge the particular dog in each case," he said.

Initially, the couple each faced two counts of having a fierce or dangerous dog, one being Zeus and the other their pup Sandy, which the municipality said was part pit bull.

Crown attorney Louise Campbell said Wednesday in Guysborough provincial court that the charges against the Camerons over the younger dog were not going forward.

Dr. Robert Robb, a veterinarian from New Glasgow who examined both dogs last week, testified the term "pit bull" is more of a general term for canines that are a mix of other breeds, which could include the American pit bull terrier and the Staffordshire bull terrier.

Both those animals are also banned in the bylaw, but court was later told by Lee Steeves of the Canadian Kennel Club that DNA testing on mixed breeds can only prove paternal ties, not genetic makeup.

Dr. Robb said he was able to conclude Zeus had such blood after consulting a chart used by the City of San Francisco that lists the characteristics of pit bulls.

He said Zeus had a number of characteristics that matched the chart, including his thick cranium and coat.

But he agreed under cross-examination that the process is not without flaws.

"All pit bull types will have those (features), but not all dogs that have those are pit bulls," he said.

The trial resumes this morning.

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[Back](#)
[Back to top](#)

NEWS

- » [Front page](#)
- » [Metro](#)
- » [Nova Scotia](#)
- » [Canada](#)
- » [World](#)
- » [Business](#)
- » [Sports](#)
- » [Entertainment](#)

[SUDOKU](#)
[CROSSWORD](#)

OPINIONS

- » [Editorials](#)
- » [Columnists](#)
- » [Letters/Feedback](#)



BLOGS

- » [Quinpool Kid](#)
- » [CATO](#)
- » [Sunday Dress](#)
- » [The Near North](#)
- » [Hockey Girl](#)

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- » [Living](#)
- » [Travel](#)
- » [At Home](#)
- » [Books](#)

- » Religion
- » Science
- » The NovaScotian

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- » Births
- » Cards of Thanks
- » In Memoriam
- » Milestones
- » Obituaries

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Albert Einstein

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