



REUTERS CANADA

# McDonald's Lawsuit Claims Rat Head in Burger

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By Cameron French

TORONTO (Reuters) - McDonald's Canada is being sued by a Toronto family that claims a severed rat's head was found nestled between the toppings of a Big Mac that was about to be eaten by a nine-year-old girl.

The \$11.2 million lawsuit against McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd., a wholly owned unit of McDonald's Corp., came about after an incident the family alleges took place in June 1999 at a Toronto outlet of the hamburger chain.

After biting into the Big Mac, Ayan Abdi Jama noticed the remains of the rodent, "complete with eyes, teeth, nose and whiskers," says the statement of claim. It adds, "the rat and the Big Mac sandwich were partially ingested by Ayan."

The lawyer for the family said the ordeal has been a horrible experience for the child.

"Obviously, it's going to impact how they see restaurant food for the rest of their lives," said Ted Charney. "From a parent's point of view, how would you feel if you watched your child take a bite out of a rat's head?"

The experience left Jama suffering from "extensive psychiatric damages," the claim says.

In a statement, McDonald's Canada said: "The quality and safety of our food is paramount to every aspect of our McDonald's operation. McDonald's will defend itself to the fullest extent of the law."

When contacted by Reuters, the branch manager had no comment, but mentioned the restaurant had passed health inspections.

Toronto restaurant sanitation has been under close scrutiny in recent months, as health officials have implemented a restaurant grading system aimed at improving public perceptions of food preparation. The system was introduced after a 16-week inspection blitz last year that resulted in 60 restaurant closings, many for various rodent infractions.

The allegations have not been proved in court, and on Monday a judge dismissed the claim against senior company officers and McDonald's Corp., parent company of McDonald's Canada. Left to be decided are claims against McDonald's Restaurants of Canada and the restaurant's assistant manager, who, the claim says, tried to confiscate the burger upon discovery of the rat's head.

McDonald's Canada estimates it serves more than three million customers each day.