

An Oklahoma breeder of German shepherds is suing American Airlines for alleged negligence that a lawsuit says resulted in the death of two puppies and the severe dehydration of two adult dogs the air carrier was transporting from California. Tulsa law firm Fields & Lavender, Attorneys at Law, PLLC filed a petition Wednesday in Tulsa County District Court against American Airlines on behalf of plaintiffs Windridge German Shepherds and business owner Elizabeth Jordan. The lawsuit states that when an American Airlines flight that was transporting four dogs to Windridge German Shepherds landed in Oklahoma City, the two puppies arrived deceased and the two adult dogs arrived severely dehydrated. The alleged incident occurred on or about April 24 of this year, according to the petition. The lawsuit says the four animals were purebred German shepherds that the air carrier transported from Ontario, California, to Dallas-Fort Worth and then from Dallas-Fort Worth to Oklahoma City. The animals were transported pursuant to American Airlines air waybill between the air carrier and Stanley Szymczyk, who sold the dogs to the Oklahoma breeder, according to the lawsuit. The waybill said American Airlines was to safely transport the four dogs and upon their arrival in Oklahoma City release the animals to Jordan, according to the lawsuit. Windridge German Shepherds is a domestic German shepherd breeder that operates in the state of Oklahoma, according to the lawsuit. Jordan is a resident of Grady County, located in western Oklahoma near Norman. "My client is a dog rearer and also a dog lover," Jordan's attorney Greg Lavender said. "It just broke her heart." Exposure to the dogs' conditions on landing was "pretty horrific" and was seen by Jordan's 12-year-old son as well, Lavender said. The transportation of live animals is subject to regulation by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, the lawsuit states. Regulations, it says, require that transported animals receive adequate water and exercise during their journey; that the original health certificates be attached to the crates of transported animals, and that no animal be transported when the forecasted temperature in a destination city is in excess of 85 degrees Fahrenheit. American Airlines declined to comment because of pending litigation. The section of

the air carrier's website devoted to transporting pets says that to help ensure the well-being of pets traveling as checked baggage, American adheres to day-of-travel temperature restrictions. Pets cannot be accepted when the current or forecasted temperature is above 85 degrees Fahrenheit or below 45 degrees Fahrenheit at any location on the itinerary, guidelines say. The website also states that aircraft cargo compartments are pressurized and are normally maintained at a temperature range of 50-70 degrees Fahrenheit. According to the lawsuit, American Airlines has been in receipt of a laboratory analysis regarding the puppies since May. The lawsuit says that at the time of filing Jordan had not received any laboratory analysis and the puppies' remains had not been transferred to her, despite an American Airlines employee allegedly promising Jordan that results would be forwarded to her and that remains would be transported to a facility of Jordan's choice. The lawsuit asks that plaintiffs Windridge German Shepherds and Jordan receive from American Airlines costs and punitive damages in excess of \$10,000. Lavender said that his client paid \$17,000 just to acquire the four dogs. The United States Department of Transportation Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings produces a monthly Air Travel Consumer Report that includes airline animal incident reports. The most recent month of animal incident reports covers August 2014 and includes 10 incidents. US Airways reported six of the incidents, Alaska Airlines reported three of the incidents and SkyWest Airlines reported one incident. Nine of the reports detailed animals injuring themselves by chewing on or otherwise trying to break free from their shipping containers. One report described a guinea pig being transported from Houston to Philadelphia found to be dead upon arrival. Casey Smith 918-732-8106 casey.smith@tulsaworld.com

Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up! *

I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.