

Georgians Sue Over Euthanasia Procedures

A former lawmaker and an ex-veterinary technician say some shelters are using gas chambers illegally.

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A former Georgia state lawmaker and a licensed veterinary technician have filed a lawsuit to prevent Georgia animal shelters from using carbon monoxide gas chambers to euthanize cats and dogs.

The lawsuit, filed March 12 in Fulton County Superior Court by former Rep. Chesley Morton and Jennifer Robinson, a former humane society worker, claims the Georgia Department of Agriculture is violating state law by allowing gas chambers as a form of euthanasia rather than lethal injections.

Gas chambers were outlawed as a form of euthanasia in Georgia after the Humane Euthanasia Act passed in 1990. The new euthanasia law mandated that lethal injection, which is considered more humane, should be the sole form of euthanasia at animal shelters.

The euthanasia law states: "Dogs and cats who have to be killed in shelters must be given the most humane and stress-free death possible ... the use of sodium pentobarbital or a derivative of it shall be the exclusive method."

Morton and Robinson are asking for the state to decline licenses to any new shelters that would use gas chambers and forbid renewal licenses to current shelters that don't stop using gas chambers to euthanize pets.

However, Agriculture Department Commissioner Tommy Irvin has insisted in the past that gas chambers are a legal and practical method to euthanize animals, particularly because some rural Georgia animal shelters don't have easy access to a veterinarian. Veterinarians are required to administer lethal injections in Georgia.