

LAWSUIT: Family's 16-year-old dog drowns in backyard pool due to house-sitting company's negligence

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- ** A copy of the lawsuit, video of the incident and stills for media use can be found [HERE](#) **

In a tragic cautionary tale for all pet owners, a Southern California family is mourning the loss of their beloved 16-year-old dog Queenie after leaving the pup in the care of a pet sitter hired through an online platform that promised reliable, high-quality pet-sitting services only to return from their vacation to find the Mini Schnauzer dead after drowning in the backyard pool, according to a lawsuit filed Thursday.

The complaint against

TrustedHousesitters LTD and Maria Ratanova, the pet sitter, was filed by Ian Leaman in Los Angeles County Superior Court, alleging negligence, breach of contract, and false advertising, among other claims. The case number is 24SMCV02675.

"The Leaman family is heartbroken and deserved better than this. Every family who has entrusted this company with their pets deserves better. The negligence, abhorrent behavior and false advertising by TrustedHousesitters is beyond the pale and utterly unacceptable," said plaintiff's attorney Camron Dowlatshahi of [Mills Sadat Dowlat LLP](#). "Even the name of the company could be considered false advertising because you certainly can't trust them."

Queenie was more than just a dog to the Leamans. She had been a cherished family member since being brought home as a puppy, growing up alongside their now-adult children. Despite her advanced age and deteriorating eyesight, Queenie was fit and healthy.



In October 2023, Ian Leaman used TrustedHousesitters to hire Ratanova to care for Queenie while the family took a five-day trip from their Los Angeles home to San Diego.

“Mr. Leaman relied on TrustedHousesitters to find a sitter because he believed its marketing material, which declared that sitters are verified and extensively background checked, and that steps are taken to ensure safety,” according to the lawsuit.

On Nov. 8, 2023, Ratanova arrived at the Leaman’s home and was given clear instructions that Queenie not be allowed unsupervised in the backyard because she could drown in the pool, the complaint states. Ratanova confirmed she would comply.

The family left for San Diego the following day. Two days later, however, as captured on video, Queenie is seen in the backyard alone at night falling into the pool, struggling to stay afloat.

About 18 minutes after Queenie fell in, Ratanova is seen running into the backyard and pulling Queenie from the water. She performs CPR but the dog is dead.

Upon returning home the next day, Leaman called TrustedHousesitters to notify them of the incident but an operator was callous and expressed no concern, the lawsuit states.

A day later on Nov. 13, 2023, Leaman received a message from Paul Maisey, the company’s head of Membership Services, who accepted full responsibility after having listened to the recording of Leaman’s call with the operator.

“I am very disappointed by the lack of empathy and understanding that you were shown. I have to be completely honest and say that this was failing on our part,” Maisey wrote to Leaman, according to the lawsuit. “I can only begin to imagine how heartbroken you must be. We have removed and banned the house sitter from our platform. We do not tolerate any form of pet neglect.”

However, Maisey reversed his position a few days later and informed Leaman the company would not accept responsibility, the complaint states.

“TrustedHousesitters represents throughout its marketing material that sitters are verified and extensively background checked and that steps are taken to ensure safety,” according to the complaint, with the company declaring, “Enjoy your holiday with added peace of mind knowing your pets and home are well looked after.”

That certainly wasn’t the case for the Leaman family.

“Ratanova was not vetted and verified by TrustedHousesitters, she did not follow Mr. Leaman’s specific instructions, nor did she keep Queenie safe from harm,” according to the lawsuit.

“TrustedHousesitters had no reasonable grounds for believing its representations were true when they were made because it does not perform background checks or verifications as advertised, and it does not check the truth of its sitters’ qualifications to be a sitter.”

The Leaman family seeks accountability and justice for Queenie, hoping this dreadful event will bring about necessary changes at TrustedHousesitters and across the industry as they continue to grieve their tragic loss.

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Camron Dowlatshahi’s legal expertise ranges from personal injury to complex business litigation, to employment discrimination, sexual harassment, unfair competition and more. He is a founding partner of [Mills Sadat Dowlat LLP](#) of Los Angeles.

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