

## Planning For Your Pet's Future

### Where will your pet go if something happens to you?

No one wants to imagine their pet being homeless with no one to care for them. But in life, unexpected events such as serious illness or tragic accidents can happen, leaving your pet without a caregiver. Do you have a plan in place should your pet outlive you? Just as you would plan for other loved ones, creating a care plan for your pet is important. Your estate plan should outline provisions for care, and perhaps funds for that care to ensure that the furry friend who loved you unconditionally will continue to enjoy a safe and comfortable life with those you trust most.



#### **Selecting A Caregiver/Guardian For Your Pet**

An important first step is to select a caregiver for your pet. Maybe it's a family member or close friend or neighbour who you know would love and care for your pet the way you do.

If you have multiple pets, it may not be possible for one person to take on the care of all of your pets, so you may need to have multiple guardians at the ready. If you don't have someone in mind to be a guardian for your pet, there is no need to worry. You can have your pet brought to Toronto Humane Society and we will place them into our adoption program where they'll receive loving care and attention while we work to place them in the best possible home.

Have a frank discussion with the chosen guardian you have selected for your pet to ensure they're willing to assume the responsibility. You can also give them the comfort of knowing that provisions will be made in your estate plans, if that is possible.

Choose an emergency caregiver if the person you have selected as your pets' guardian doesn't live close by. This will ensure that there is someone to care for your pet in an urgent situation until your long-term caregiver can pick up your pet.

#### **Prepare an Emergency Plan**

Create a pet information document with your veterinary contact, detailed information on your pet's medical needs and dietary requirements, vaccination records, care schedule, and any other information that is relevant to their well-being.

Make sure that your friends/family are aware of whom you have chosen as your emergency caregiver, and that they will be able to contact them quickly and easily. Keep everyone in the loop as to how many pets you own.



## **Estate Planning For Your Pet**

If you would like to put your pet's care plan in place formally, you may wish to include a provision in your will, specifically addressing your pet. This will ensure that after you are gone, your pet will be taken care of according to the standard you've provided them during your lifetime. There are a few ways you can do this:

- Leaving a gift designated to your pet's guardian in your will and expressing your intention and wish that it be used for the benefit of the pet.
- Creating a formal trust to leave funds for your companion animal - this type of trust would only come into effect upon your death. Should you be hospitalized or otherwise incapacitated, caregivers will have to rely on informal arrangements if you do not also have a living trust in place.
- Putting a direction into your power of attorney document would allow your agent to make payments to the caregiver who has your pet, and to pay for extraordinary veterinary expenses or other things that could come up.

If you do not have provisions for your pet in your will, or any informal agreements amongst friends and family, your companion would be dealt with as property.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What if I have more than one pet?**

Speak to the people you are interested in having be your companions' guardians before making any formal or informal arrangements. It may not be possible for one person to take on the care of all of your animals, so you may need to have multiple guardians at the ready.

### **How much money should I set aside in a trust for the care of my pet?**

Depending on the arrangement you have with your chosen caregiver you may not need to set any money aside, but many people do like to leave something that will provide for the basic needs of their pets for the expected duration of their life. Do your best to estimate your yearly expenses on pet related items and care and multiply that by the estimated years they have remaining.

### **Do I require legal assistance to create my will or trust?**

You may choose to work with an estate lawyer or financial planner, but you can also create your own will through online services like Willfora, that provide a free service. Check out more information at [Plan Your Will - Toronto Humane Society](#).

