

## **Who Will Care for Your Pet?**

If you have a severe illness or accident or pass away, who will you trust to look after your pet? There are many ways to ensure your pet continues to have a loving home.

### **Guardian of Your Minor Children**

If you also have minor children, the nominated guardian of your minor children can be a good first choice to take care of the family pet. The guardian is already taking on the large responsibility of caring for your children, so they may also be willing to take care of your pet. In addition, having the beloved family pet stay with the children may comfort them during a difficult time in their lives. It is important that you discuss this with your nominated guardian to ensure that they are willing to undertake the additional responsibility.

### **Family or Friends**

When selecting a caregiver for your pet, most people look to a trusted family member or friend who may be willing to care for them. This person has probably spent time with your pet and already knows their typical routines and behaviors, making them more comfortable taking on the responsibility. This choice may also provide your pet with a familiar environment. However, taking on a new furry family member is a big responsibility that requires some considerations:

- Does their lifestyle, home, and comfort with pets make them a good fit for caregiving?
- Do they already have other pets? If yes, do they get along with each other?
- Do they understand the expectations and level of care that the pet requires?
- Are there specific instructions or preferences they may not be able to accommodate?
- Can they afford the financial responsibility of supporting a pet?

### **Animal Welfare Organizations**

In some instances, animal welfare organizations such as shelters, rescue groups, sanctuaries, or foundations can take your pet and find a suitable home. Look for reputable organizations in the area and visit them to assess their cleanliness, staff interactions with animals, and overall environment. The organization must provide a safe and comfortable space while locating a loving permanent home. You should also consider whether this organization euthanizes pets that are not adopted and whether that plays into your choice of organization. Creating a comprehensive profile of your pet, including their medical history, behavior, preferences, and any special needs, with photographs and videos of the pet, could make the adoption process easier for the organization.

### **Executor's or Trustee's Choice**

Depending on your situation, you may feel more comfortable with giving the person who winds down your affairs (the executor or trustee) the authority to choose the most suitable home for your pet. Because things can change unexpectedly, providing this level of flexibility can help ensure that your pet goes to a suitable, loving home, even if it is not a home that you initially considered.

## **Make Your Wishes Known in Your Estate Plan**

By proactively planning, you can make financial and care arrangements for your pet's care well in advance, making the transition easier on everyone involved.

Once everything is clearly documented for your pet's care in either a will or trust, you must keep your legal documents and any other pertinent information easily accessible to the designated caretaker and ensure it is kept up to date. Let family members, executors, or trustees know the location of any necessary documentation to care for your pet.

Make sure you review your estate plan annually for any changes in your circumstances, your pet's health, behavior, routines, or preferences. We are available to help you if you are having trouble selecting the right pet caretaker or want to discuss the best way to protect your pet. Give us a call to schedule a time to discuss ways we can protect your beloved pet.