



Planning for the future: Caring for your pet

WE ALL IMAGINE THAT WE WILL OUTLIVE OUR PETS. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. As you're planning your estate, it's important to consider what will happen to your pet(s). In partnership with the Maryland Bar Foundation, the Maryland SPCA is proud to provide you with this guide for planning for the care of your pet. This packet contains:

- **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS: IF MY PET OUTLIVES ME.**
- **QUESTIONS FOR CREATING A PET DATA SHEET FOR A CARETAKER.**
- **A SAMPLE PET CARE CARD.**

This packet does not contain and should not be considered a substitute for obtaining professional legal or estate advice. We encourage you to speak with your lawyer or estate manager to discuss what options are best for you and your pet.

If you have questions about preparing your last will and testament or need to find a lawyer, there are various resources available in Maryland:

The Maryland State Office of the Register of Wills: registers.maryland.gov/main/home.html

The Maryland Bar Association www.msba.org ; (410) 685-7878 or (800) 492-1964

The Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Services: www.mvlslaw.org; (410) 547-6537 or (800) 510-0050

The People's Law Library of Maryland and Maryland Legal Aid's Senior Legal Helpline: general number: 866-635-2948; hotline: 866-635-2948

Commonly Asked Questions: If my pet outlives me.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY PET(S) OUTLIVE ME?

- If you've clearly outlined a plan of care for your pets and shared your plan with your estate planner, executor or lawyer and the individual or organization you have chosen to be care giver, your chosen care giver will assume custody of your pets.
- If you have not made a plan or shared your plan, your pets will be transported into the care of a city or county shelter, unless a family member or friend volunteers to take custody.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO MAKE SURE MY PETS ARE CARED FOR IF THEY OUTLIVE ME?

- Make a plan.
- Share that plan with all the people involved. For example—a family member, trusted friend or neighbor, your estate planner, financial planner, lawyer and/or executor of your estate.
- Make sure a copy of your plan is easily accessible to the persons who have agreed to care for your pets, your lawyer and the executor of your estate.

WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY PLAN?

- The name and contact information of an individual or organization that has agreed to take care of your pets.
- A completed Pet Data Sheet that is attached to your will and shared with the individual or organization that you have entrusted with your pet's care.
- A completed "Pet Care Card – In case of emergency" which can be kept on the refrigerator or other prominent place in your home.
- Your estate planner or lawyer can help you set up a trust to pay for the care of your pet. This is often welcome by the caregiver, but not usually required.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I UPDATE MY PLAN?

- Update your Pet Data Sheet and "in case of emergency card" annually or as needed. It's a good idea to update your information at the same time as your pet's annual vet visit.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER WHO WILL TAKE MY PET?

- A number of rescues and animal welfare organizations have programs to take pet custody. At the Maryland SPCA, we have Legacy of Care.
- Legacy of Care will provide shelter and care while finding a new home for your pets.
- A brief interview is required during which the MD SPCA collects health and personality information on your pet to qualify them for our adoption program.
- Once your pet is qualified for Legacy of Care, the MD SPCA asks that you include the MD SPCA in your charitable gift planning. Whether you choose to make a bequest of cash, insurance policy or retirement account, your planned gift will help to care for many homeless pets.
- To learn more about Legacy of Care, please contact Meg Allen Marx, Senior Development Officer, at mmarx@mdspca.org or (410) 235-8826 ext. 127.

Creating a Pet Data Sheet for a Caretaker

Once a caretaker has agreed to take custody of your pet should the need arise, you will want to provide that person or organization with as much information about your pet as possible.

You will want to provide a medical history, details about day-to-day care such as what your pet eats and how often, and a description of your pet's personality and behavior. Is your pet shy with new people or animals; does he have a favorite toy; does she prefer to sleep in your room or somewhere else? These details will help a potential caretaker make the adjustment to a new home as easy as possible.

The following Pet Data Sheet can help you describe your pet. It is not exhaustive and not every question will apply to your pet. Please take advantage of the space on the back of the page to provide more details.

Be sure to leave a copy of this information with more than one person and update the information annually or as needed!