



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). 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.
 - Update your pet's microchip to include the name and contact information of the person or organization who will take custody of your pet.
 - 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 when your pet experiences a significant medical or behavioral change. 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. Interview any organization that may be a candidate to accept your pet. Questions you may want to ask include:

- How will the organization determine whether your pet is a candidate for a new home? What will happen if they are not considered a good adoption candidate?
- Will the organization keep a bonded pair together?
- Is there a time limit for how long your pet can stay in the adoption program? Does the organization euthanize for space?
- What does the organization require to take custody of your pet?

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!

Pet Data Sheet

NAME

BREED

IF MIXED, WHAT IS THE PREDOMINATE BREED

DISTINCTIVE MARKINGS

GENDER

SPAYED/NEUTERED

AGE

HOW LONG HAS THE PET LIVED WITH YOU

VETERINARIAN

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBER

LAST TIME YOUR PET VISITED THE VET

DATE OF LAST VACCINATIONS *(include vaccination records if available)*

MEDICAL/PHYSICAL CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE REGULAR ATTENTION

ANY PAST MEDICAL CONDITIONS *(Include information about tests and lab work if available)*

MEDICATIONS

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO GET YOUR PET TO TAKE MEDICINE

IS YOUR PET HOUSE- OR LITTERBOX-TRAINED

DOES S/HE OCCASIONALLY HAVE ACCIDENTS

IF SO, WHEN

WHERE DOES YOUR DOG PREFER TO ELIMINATE AND HOW OFTEN

IS YOUR CAT ALLOWED OUTSIDE

IF SO, WHEN AND FOR HOW LONG

IS YOUR PET USED TO BEING ALONE FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME

WHERE DOES YOUR PET STAY IF YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE

IS YOUR PET COMFORTABLE WITH CHILDREN

WHAT AGES OF CHILDREN

HOW DOES YOUR PET RESPOND TO NEW PEOPLE (FRIENDLY/SHY/AGGRESSIVE/OTHER)

DOES YOUR PET LIVE WITH OTHER ANIMALS

WHAT TYPES

HOW DOES S/HE INTERACT WITH OTHER ANIMALS (PLAYFUL/IGNORES/OTHER)

HAS YOUR PET EVER SERIOUSLY SCRATCHED OR BITTEN SOMEONE

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

WHAT IS YOUR PET'S ENERGY LEVEL (LOVES TO SLEEP/BUSY/SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN)

WHERE DOES S/HE SLEEP

WHAT ARE YOUR PET'S FAVORITE TOYS OR GAMES

HAS YOUR PET HAD OBEDIENCE TRAINING

HOW DO YOU CORRECT YOUR PET

WHAT BRAND AND TYPE (CANNED, DRY, BOTH) FOOD DOES YOUR PET EAT

HOW OFTEN AND AT WHAT TIMES

HOW MUCH OF EACH TYPE PER FEEDING

DOES YOUR PET GET TREATS

WHAT TYPE AND WHEN

WHERE DO YOU KEEP PET FOODS, TOYS AND SUPPLIES

WHAT IS YOUR PET AFRAID OF, IF ANYTHING

IS YOUR PET ALLOWED ON THE FURNITURE

ARE THERE BEHAVIORS THAT MIGHT BE CHALLENGING DURING A TRANSITION TO A NEW HOME
(JUMP ON PEOPLE/THINGS, GET INTO TRASH, DISTURB PLANTS, RUN AWAY, ETC.)

WHO GROOMS YOUR PET

HOW OFTEN

ANY BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS DURING GROOMING

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE US TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PET?

Pet Care Card

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

In the event of my death, please contact the following person(s) regarding care of my pets:

NAME: _____

primary phone: _____

alt. phone: _____

email: _____

NAME: _____

primary phone: _____

alt. phone: _____

email: _____

PETS (NAMES & BRIEF DESCRIPTION):

NAME: _____

Gender: _____

Age (as of date): _____

Breed: _____

Distinctive markings: _____

Where you can normally find me in the house: _____

NAME: _____

Gender: _____

Age (as of date): _____

Breed: _____

Distinctive markings: _____

Where you can normally find me in the house: _____