



## **PLANNING FOR YOUR PETS WHEN YOU CAN'T TAKE CARE OF THEM**

*Prepare NOW in case of an unexpected illness, accident, or death.*

To ensure your pet will continue to receive the care needed should something unexpected happen to you, it is essential to plan ahead. Below are some tips to help you be prepared for the unexpected.

### **Identify at least 2 people who agree to be immediate, temporary emergency pet caregivers.**

- Make sure they have a way to get inside your home, know when and what to feed your pets, who your veterinarian is, and what your arrangements are for permanent care of your pet. Clarify financial arrangements ahead of time – Will they be paid for their time? Reimbursed for any food, supplies, veterinary bills, transportation, etc.?
- Make sure your neighbors, friends, and relatives know how many pets you have and the names and contact numbers of the emergency caregivers.
- In your wallet, have a card listing the names and phone numbers of your emergency pet caregivers.
- Post, in a clearly visible place inside your home, the names and phone numbers of your emergency pet caregivers.

### **Plan for longer-term or permanent care for your pets.**

- If you have several pets, determine if all will go to the same person or if they need to be split up with different people – try to keep pets that have a special bond together.
- It is best to identify people who already have a relationship with your pets and important that you have complete trust in their ability to properly care for and make decisions for your pet's health and well-being.
- Identify 'backup' caregivers, in case your primary choice is unable to help at the time.
- Before naming, be sure the new caregiver understands the responsibility that they will be assuming – becoming the new owner of your pets.
- Assess if you will be able to, or want to, provide any financial resources to the new owners for the long-term care of your pets.
- If you adopted your pets from a shelter or rescue organization, check your paperwork to see if they require notification of your situation, return of the animal, and/or if they will be able to help care for your pets.
- If unable to identify specific people, it is possible to direct your executor or personal representative named in your legal document to place your pets.

**Work with an attorney.**

- Create documents that clearly identify your wishes for how your pets are to be cared for, who is to take ownership, and any money that will go to the new owners.
- Create documents that arrange for long-term care of your pets if you become ill or incapacitated, in addition to their care upon your death.
- Discuss with your attorney what type of document(s) is best for your situation – a will, trust, power of attorney, pet trust, and/or pet protection agreement.
- Consider granting broad discretion to the executor about making decisions and utilizing estate fund for your pet’s well-being – to help ensure proper care is given to your pets in a manner that any responsible and devoted pet owner would.
  - Never leave money directly to a pet.
- Understand how long it generally takes for directives in the type of document you create will take effect. Will they be accomplished in days, weeks, or months? It may take some time before your wishes are implemented. Having a temporary emergency pet caregiver in place will help ensure your pet is well cared for during this time.

This document is intended to provide general information and to be a source of thought for discussion and planning. It is not intended to provide or to be a substitute for legal advice.