



PROVIDING FOR YOUR PET'S FUTURE

Introduction

When a pet is part of your daily life, you provide her with food and water, shelter, exercise, play-time, veterinary care, and lots of love. But what if something happens to you and you cannot care for your pet? What if you become ill, incapacitated or worse? To ensure that your animal companion will be cared for immediately if something should happen to you, it is essential to make plans NOW. Being placed in an animal shelter after being in a loving home is very stressful for both cats and dogs and can have an adverse effect on their health and temperament. Here are some of the things you can do to make sure your pet is cared for when you can't be there for her.

Prepare for the unexpected

Your pet needs care every day, often more than once a day. If something happens to prevent you from being home or maybe from even communicating that you have a pet at need at home, you can prevent her from being overlooked.

- 1) Find at least two responsible and trusted friends or relatives who agree to serve as temporary or permanent emergency caregivers for your pet(s). They should have keys to your house, feeding and care instructions, the name of your veterinarian, and should get to know your pet(s) if at all possible.
- 2) Make sure your neighbors, friends, and relatives know how many pets live in or outside of your home and that they have the names and contact numbers of the your emergency pet caregivers. Emergency caregivers should also know how to contact each other.
- 3) Carry a wallet "alert card" that lists the names and phone numbers of your emergency pet caregivers and your veterinarian.
- 4) Post "in case of emergency" notices on your doors or windows specifying how many and what types of pets you have. These notices will alert emergency-response personnel during a fire or other home emergency. Make sure they are up-to-date and don't fade and become illegible.
- 5) Affix to the inside of your front and back doors a removable notice listing emergency contact names and phone numbers.

BECAUSE PETS NEED CARE DAILY and will need *immediate* attention should you die or become incapacitated, the importance of making these informal arrangements for temporary care giving cannot be overemphasized.

How can I ensure long-term or permanent care for my pet if I become seriously ill or die?

One way to make sure that your wishes are fulfilled is by making *formal* arrangements that specifically cover the care of your pet. Work with an attorney to draw up a special will, trust, or other document to provide for the care and ownership of your pet as well as the money necessary to care for her.

How do I choose a permanent caregiver?

If you have more than one pet, you need to decide if your pets should all go to one person or if it is possible to separate them. Bonded pets should stay together if at all possible. Talk to your spouse, partner, adult children or grandchildren, siblings, adult nieces and nephews, or friends to find out who is most willing and able to provide a good home for your pet. Remember, the new owner will have full discretion over the animal's care—including veterinary treatment—so make sure you choose a person you trust and will do what is in the best interests of your pet.

Review your arrangements every year, say, on your pet's birthday or your own birthday. Over time, people's homes, jobs, families, and priorities change, so you want to make sure that your emergency caregivers are still willing and able to care for your pet.

If you cannot find a person who is willing to take your pets in the event of your death, you may ask that the executor of your estate make every effort to find your pet a home with another individual or family to avoid placing your pet in an animal shelter. Finding a satisfactory new home can take several weeks of searching, so again, it is important to line up temporary care. You also have to know and trust your executor and provide useful, but not unrealistically confining, instructions in your will. You should authorize your executor to expend funds from your estate for the temporary care of your pet as well as for the costs of looking for a new home and transporting the animal to it. The will should also grant discretion to your executor in making decisions about the pet(s) and in expending estate funds for care, shelter, medicine, and other needs.

Can I entrust the care of my pet to the SPCA of Tompkins County?

It is *very* stressful for an animal used to living in a loving home to be placed in a shelter. At the same time, it is important for your pet to be cared for at all times. We recommend that you work with your family, friends, emergency caregivers, and veterinarian to find a home for your pet when you die.

Your pets are companion animals, and are used to a certain way of life. Whether you have a cat used to sharing your bedside table glass of water or a dog that is used to being walked at 7:15 every morning, changing these habits can be very confusing for them. Finding them a home with someone who knows them and can provide them companionship will help to reduce the stress of losing you.

If there are no other alternatives, the SPCA of Tompkins County is a no kill, open admission shelter and will not refuse the pets of any resident of Tompkins County.

- We ask for a surrender donation to cover the medical and shelter costs of your pets
- We cannot guarantee that multiple pets will be kept together
- We cannot guarantee that unhealthy, untreatable pets will be adoptable
- We cannot guarantee that dogs who exhibit dangerous behavior will be adoptable
- We can guarantee that we will do everything we can to give your pets proper care and shelter and place them up for adoption whenever possible.