



Protect Your Pets for when you're no longer be

You'd never go a day without feeding your cat or leave on vacation without making arrangements for your dog. But have you ever thought about the fate of your beloved pets if something unexpected were to happen to you?

Thankfully, across the United States and in many other countries pet trusts are recognized as a valid part of your estate plan. In the event of your death or disability, you can provide for your pets by establishing a pet trust—an increasingly popular way to ensure the long-term health and happiness of your faithful companions. (Check with your estate planning attorney for the options available in your state/or country).

When you create such a trust, you'll name someone as the physical caregiver, as well as someone to manage the trust's money. At the end of your pet's life, the trust will terminate and the balance of the trust funds can be distributed to your loved ones or a favorite charitable organization, such as ROLDA.

Elements of a Pet Trust

Consider the following elements when putting your pet trust together:

1

IDENTIFICATION

Identify the pets you would like cared for after your lifetime, but make sure your estate planning attorney adds some flexibility into your document. You should also include pets that you may adopt after the trust is created.

STANDARD OF CARE

Decide what level of care you want to provide for your pet. Does that mean hiring a full-time caregiver or leaving your pets with a relative?

Be as specific as possible by including information about food (what brands, how much, and how often), housing, grooming, exercise (how often and how long), and medical care. Burial wishes and veterinary information should also be listed to make your caregiver's job easier.

2

3

FUNDING

Determine the amount of money you'll leave behind by estimating the annual cost of care for the rest of your pet's anticipated lifetime. Avoid funding the trust with excessive amounts as some courts - and loved ones - may object.

4

CAREGIVER

Select your pet's caregiver and get their agreement ahead of time.

If you have more than one pet, would you want them to go to separate caregivers or the same one? You'll also want to name a backup caregiver in case your pet outlives the original caregiver. Stay in touch with the caregivers in case circumstances change.

5

TRUSTEE

Name a trustee who will oversee the money and make ongoing distributions to the caregiver. The trustee should also make regular inspections of your pet. A caregiver and trustee can be the same person. You'll also need a backup trustee.



FINAL BENEFICIARY

Choose a final beneficiary to receive any remaining trust funds after your pet has passed. This is often left with loved ones and/or charitable causes, such as ROLDA.

6

Make Your Wishes Known

Give a copy of your pet trust to the caregiver and trustee.

Leave emergency phone numbers with the executor or personal representative of your estate and your family. Let them know how important it is to move quickly if something should happen to you.

Don't risk your pet being abandoned during these early days.

Who Will Care for Your Pet if You Become Disabled?

A pet trust will become effective should you become disabled. Your designated caregiver can care for your pet under the provisions in your trust. This type of trust would require funding now so that a caregiver would have access to the trust funds should a disability occur during your lifetime. If you never face disability, the trust becomes effective upon your death.

Next Steps

To make sure your will accomplishes all you intend, seek the help of an attorney who specializes in estate planning.