

## What If Your Cat Outlives You?

**Learn how to have your cat cared for in a retirement home after you're gone.**

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It's very important to plan for your cat's future should you die or be unable to provide daily love and care. Never assume that relatives or friends want the responsibility of your pet, so be sure to check. If no one is willing to become your pet's caretaker, consider a retirement home.

Fortunately, there are many wonderful retirement homes around the country that offer a permanent, happy and loving environment for cats that have lost their owners.

Animal-law attorneys across the United States are establishing new guidelines to ensure that should cat owners want their pets to go to retirement homes, their wishes will be legally recognized. According to Sandra Toye, a Los Angeles animal-law attorney, one way to ensure the best transition possible for a cat that has lost its owner is to draw up legal documentation that specifically states the late owner's intentions in great detail. "You must specify whether you want your pet to go to a retirement home permanently, or whether you want it to go there initially and then be re-adopted," Toye explains. "If the latter is your intention, you must also state whether you want the new owner to be an elderly person or a family with young children." "The transition must be done as quickly as possible to reduce the stress involved in moving twice after the trauma of losing its original family surroundings," Toye adds. Toye also advises to ensure the retirement home you select allows for re-adoption. "Many of them don't because often it is difficult to screen people to ensure they have the best interest of the cat at heart. Once a cat leaves a retirement home, it's hard to ensure the caregiver's wishes since there is now one more person in the chain."

"It may be possible to bind that person to the trust that has been created to take care of the pet. However, it is costly and untested in court," Toye says.

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