

Plan Ahead to Protect Your Cat

Use this checklist to provide care for your cat after you're gone.

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Formulate a plan to ensure your wishes for your cat are carried out. While no one likes to think about their own death, it will affect not only your friends and family, but also your cats. If you don't plan ahead, your cats are at the mercy of your will executor. Lucky cats end up living with friends or family, but unlucky cats can wind up at an animal shelter, dumped on the streets or euthanized. Since careful planning is the only way to protect your cat, use this checklist to help develop a plan.

Decide whether you want to include your cat in your will, create a pet trust or leave your cat to a rescue or sanctuary.

Locate an estate attorney with experience including pets in estate plans or one who is willing to become educated about your state's laws and the issues surrounding estate planning and pets.

If you wish to leave your cat to a rescue or sanctuary, identify an appropriate organization after asking for recommendations, talking to potential organizations, reviewing their policies and scheduling a visit. Determine what arrangements you need to make beforehand. Then talk to your attorney about including appropriate language in your will.

Decide how much money you can allocate to the rescue, caregiver or pet trust to help care for your cat once you are gone.

If you plan to will your cat to someone or to establish a pet trust, identify who will care for your cat. Talk to him ahead of time and make sure he is willing to serve as a caregiver. Ask him to spend time with your cat and make sure he knows your cat's needs and personality.

If you establish a pet trust, designate someone to administer the trust. This person doles out money to the caregiver for your cat's expenses and insures that the terms of the trust are fulfilled. Make sure the person you choose is willing to perform these duties.

Inform friends and family about your plans for your cat.

Select a local friend or relative who will be responsible for caring for your cat in the event you are hospitalized or from the time of your death until the long-term caregiver receives your cat.

Ensure that your emergency contacts know to contact the short-term caregiver in the event you are hospitalized or pass away.

Make sure your neighbors know who your cat's emergency caregiver is, and ask that they contact the caregiver if something happens to you.

Write down feeding instructions, information about your cat's special needs and the name and number of your cat's veterinarian, and give this information to the emergency and long-term caregivers for your cat. Update this information periodically.

Carry a card in your wallet listing your emergency contacts, including your pet caregiver. Also place a notice inside your front door with similar information.

Update your plans if you add a new cat to your household.

Periodically contact your emergency caregiver, pet-trust administrator and long-term caregiver to make sure they're still willing to perform their assigned duties for your cat.

Taking the precautions above will give you peace of mind and will ensure your cat gets proper care after you're gone.



For more information about caring for your pets after you're gone, visit the North Shore Animal League America website and click on "Planned Giving" or "Safe Haven."