

# Providing for Your Animal Companions



Critical steps should be taken now to ensure that if you become unable to care for your animal companions, they will still receive the loving care that they are accustomed to and that the transition to a life without you will be as stress-free as possible.

## Emergency Planning

It is essential that you arrange for someone to come to your home at short notice to visit your animals in the event of an emergency. The person you choose will need to be able to provide them with food and fresh water, console them, and take care of all their other needs until their long-term care has been arranged. Many people select a family member or a close neighbour who has a key to their home and is already familiar with their animal companions.

## Long-Term Planning: Finding a Guardian You Trust

The process of ensuring that your animals' quality of life is maintained is filled with difficult but important choices. Now is the time to make plans to protect them and ensure their care in the event that they outlive you or you become incapacitated.

For many people, selecting the best permanent guardian for their animal companions is the most difficult part of estate planning. It is a good idea to name at least two candidates in case your first choice is not able, available, or willing to take responsibility for your animals if the need arises. Everyone's situation is different, but the key factor in selecting a guardian is trust: choose someone you trust to carry out your wishes.

## Vital Information

It is important to maintain files with current information about each of your animals and the arrangements that you have made for their care. This information should also be given to the people nominated as their temporary carers and permanent guardians. PETA's attached "Emergency Animal Care Instructions" form can be used for this purpose.

[At a minimum, keep an up-to-date list of people who should be contacted in the event of an emergency, along with the following:](#)

- ▶ The name, date or year of birth, and sex of each animal
- ▶ The name, address, and telephone number of their veterinarian
- ▶ Their diets, eating habits, and feeding schedules
- ▶ A picture or two of each animal
- ▶ Insights into their behaviour: likes and dislikes, personalities, etc
- ▶ A description of their current lifestyle (e.g. Do they spend time in your garden? Do they often travel in your car with you? Where do they sleep? What are their favourite toys?)
- ▶ A list of priorities that should be considered if it becomes necessary to find them a new home
- ▶ Details on any medication they need
- ▶ Details on any pet insurance and microchip documents

Once a year, revisit the files in which this information is stored and make necessary modifications in order to keep the information as accurate and helpful as possible. Keep critical contact information – as well as information about where these files can be found – in your handbag or wallet. In a highly visible location in your home, e.g. in your front window, there should also be a sign or sticker indicating how many animal companions you have.

## Formalising Your Plans

Once you have selected carers and guardians, we suggest that you complete your plans in consultation with your solicitor, who will be able to advise you on a variety of options – including trusts and conditional bequests – that may vary according to your state of residence.



You may want to ask your solicitor to word your legal documents in a way that limits the powers or increases the responsibilities of your chosen carers and guardians. The following are some examples of clauses that you may want to include:

- ▶ Ensure that your animals will never be tested on, used for research of any kind, or commercially exploited.
- ▶ Require your chosen carer to visit and carefully inspect any prospective new home before relinquishing custody of your animals.
- ▶ Require the carer to request a fee from a potential new guardian or take other steps to ensure that whoever is seeking custody of the animals is not attempting to acquire them deceptively with the ultimate goal of selling them to others who might exploit and harm them.
- ▶ Require that if and when it becomes necessary, euthanasia be performed by a licensed veterinarian or an animal shelter worker only.
- ▶ Require that each animal be seen by a veterinarian at least once a year.
- ▶ State any other stipulations clearly and succinctly in order to ensure that your animal companions continue to enjoy the life that you want them to have.

## Special Considerations

Unfortunately, horses, cows, sheep, and many other species retain commercial value even after death, which heightens the possibility that unprincipled people will try to acquire them under false pretenses or harm them for personal gain. Be sure to stipulate in your will or trust that your animals are, under no circumstances, to be used commercially or sold for commercial use in the future, whether they're alive or dead.

It is also important to consider your animals' life expectancy when making your plans. Turtles, horses, exotic birds, and many other animals can live for 50 years or more. Many potential guardians will be unable to make a lifetime commitment to such animals. Choose guardians with care in order to minimise the chance that your animals will be shuffled from person to person or fall into the wrong hands.

These are difficult but important choices. Now is the time to make these decisions in order to protect your animals and provide for their care in the event that they outlive you.

## Ensuring Your Wishes

Having a comprehensive estate plan will ensure that your wishes for yourself and your loved ones are carried out. As you make your plans to secure care for your animal companions, it's also a good time to make sure that all of your estate documents, including your will, are up to date. For information on leaving a legacy for animals through a gift to PETA in your will, please don't hesitate to contact us at [Bequests@peta.org.au](mailto:Bequests@peta.org.au) or on 08 8556 5828.

## Emergency Animal Care Instructions

Use a separate sheet for each animal companion.

Place copies in a prominent location in your home, share one with each of the selected carers, and distribute copies to neighbours, friends, family, and your veterinarian.

**The people named in this form have agreed to act as emergency carers for my animal companions. Please contact them if you believe that my animals are in danger or in the event of my death or inability to care for them. The carers will need the information provided below.**

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

### Animal Companion

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Date or year of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Microchip ID \_\_\_\_\_ Physical description \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Carer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

### Alternative Emergency Carer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

### Veterinarian

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions for Care

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Location of leads, carriers, and other supplies \_\_\_\_\_

Location of food and water \_\_\_\_\_

Type of food and place purchased \_\_\_\_\_

Feeding schedule \_\_\_\_\_

Daily routine \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sleep schedule \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Walks (how often, time of day, and where) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Favourite places, games, and toys \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Likes and dislikes \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Personality and behaviour \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Medical Information

Medical history \_\_\_\_\_

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Medications and instructions \_\_\_\_\_

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Provisions for permanent long-term care \_\_\_\_\_

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