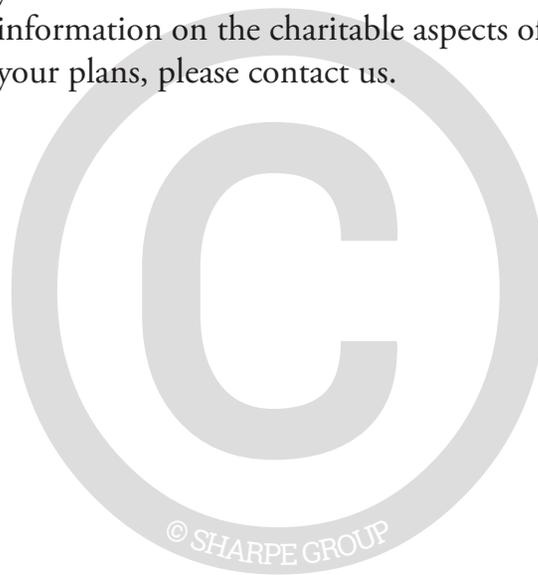


- In order to ensure your pet is getting good care, you may want to have the trustee inspect your pet regularly, even if a separate caretaker is designated. Caretakers may change over time.
- Estimate the cost of adequately administering the trust and caring for your pet, including routine and unexpected veterinary bills, grooming, feeding and boarding costs. Multiply this by your pet's life expectancy and set this amount aside. It is usually better to estimate high to adequately provide for the unknown.
- If you are naming a friend or relative to provide care for your pet, it might be thoughtful to add a bequest to the caretaker. The bequest is non-taxable to the caretaker and can be above and beyond amounts left to provide for the pet's care. The bequest would be contingent on the caretaker accepting responsibility for the pet's continuing care.
- Consider giving any remaining funds to a charitable organization that cares for pets.

Learn More

For most of us, our pets are beloved members of the family. By planning today, you can know your four-legged loved ones will be cared for after your lifetime. If we can offer further information on the charitable aspects of your plans, please contact us.



Caring for Our Four-Legged Loved Ones

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Have you considered what will happen to your pets after you are gone? Who will care for them, and how will they be taken care of?

Although we may think of our pets as family, the laws of our country consider pets to be property, preventing pet owners from making gifts to pets in their will or other estate plans. However, you can take other steps to ensure their care.

Including your pets in the estate planning process can ensure their future well-being and care. Read on for answers to questions about setting up a pet trust or other arrangement in your estate plans.

Q. What is a pet trust?

A. Pet trusts are special trusts created to provide for your pets, including naming a trustee and setting aside funds needed to meet their needs. The trust will often name or recommend a specific caretaker or direct the trustee to make this decision for you.

A pet trust allows you to share information and outline your specific wishes for the care of your pet, such as deciding who the caretaker will be. As part of your pet trust, you will need to set

aside funds to pay for the costs of the trust as well as the care of your pet. You can provide the funds now or in your will or revocable living trust.

Pet trusts are generally more costly to set up but also provide a higher level of protection for your pet and peace of mind for you. Contact your attorney for more information about establishing a pet trust in your plans.

Q. Who can be trustee of my pet trust?

A. Anyone you wish, including a friend or family member, or a bank or charity, particularly if any leftover funds will be going to that organization. It is a good idea to name a successor trustee in case the original trustee is no longer able to serve.

Q. What are some other options besides a pet trust?

A. You can direct your pets be given to a trusted caretaker by a written agreement (also known as a Pet Protection Agreement) which is valid in all states. This is a legally enforceable agreement between two individuals or entities (the pet parent and pet guardian).

You can then make a gift to the caretaker on the condition they care for your pet. If this is not done, the funds must be returned to your trust or sent elsewhere as you direct. Choose your caretaker wisely or request your executor or trustee make the decision on your behalf.

An animal rescue or animal welfare group (such as a local humane society) may also be able to accept responsibility for finding a good home for your pet, particularly if your arrangements include the costs of the pet's care.

Other Important Things to Consider:

- You may want to use photos, DNA, microchips or other ways to clearly identify your pet. This will also ensure no one can abuse your trust.
- Describe how your pet should be cared for in a letter. Include any special instructions on foods, food quantities or brands, treats, toys, medication or any other relevant information. Reference the letter in your will or trust. This can be adjusted over time as things change.