



PLAN FOR THE CARE OF YOUR PET

Ellen Walker
Miller, Miller & Canby
200-B Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

If you became ill or died, who would care for your pet? Have you spoken to your family members about this, and can you be confident that this special “family member” will be tended to in the manner you would want?

Formal, advance planning is vital. There are too many instances where a pet owner’s expectations of how a pet would be provided for have simply not been fulfilled, sometimes with tragic results.

Don’t Assume:

- That “Someone” will take over for you if you become ill or die;
- That “Someone” will give your pets the same loving care you would provide;
- That “Someone” will know your pets likes and dislikes, special needs and habits;
- That your pets will not end up in the pound!

You cannot assume that even a well-developed care plan will be carried out. And most people have no plans at all. They just think, “Of course, my _____ (Pick one: Son, Daughter, Spouse, Friend) will step in.” Never mind that Daughter lives in France, Son is still in school, Spouse has never really liked Pet anyway. Friend just cannot handle another

responsibility. What if the person who offers to “step in” is the last person you would want to take care of your pet?

Formally detailing your pet care plans in **legally enforceable documents** helps ensure that your goals for your pet’s well-being are carried out, both during your lifetime when you are not capable of caring for your pet, and after your death. A **Power of Attorney** authorizing your Agent to act on your behalf in matters relating to your pet, simple provisions in a **Last Will and Testament**, and/or more detailed provisions in a **Pet Trust** created during your life or in your Will can cover the situation.

The planning process, carried to fruition in your documents, causes you to:

- Identify and confer with the people you select to play key roles in both temporary and permanent care plans (for example, the caregiver, emergency caregiver, trustees, the executor of your estate, your agent under your Power of Attorney), and create “safety net” mechanisms to fill the void if those you have designated cannot fulfill their roles;
- Inform the caregiver of your pet’s needs, habits, preferences, fears;
- Assess the financial requirements of pet care and provide the caregiver with adequate resources for food, toys, veterinary/health and end of life expenses, grooming, etc;
- Address compensation and tax issues; and
- Evaluate if a trust is appropriate for your pet, and if so, what kind.

Having a formal plan and documents in place provides:

- Legally enforceable mechanisms for carrying out your plan of care and ensuring that the funds you allocate are used for the intended purpose;
- Oversight by a court and/or a trust enforcer designated by you;
- Compliance with legal standards for identification of the protected pet;

- Clear communication facilitating a smooth, timely delivery of your pet to a temporary or permanent caregiver without delays that might cause your pet to be removed from the home and placed in an animal shelter or might otherwise harm your pet.

Don't leave your pet's future to chance. Plan, and get the result you want!

Ellen Walker has practiced with Miller, Miller & Canby since 1987. She concentrates her practice in the areas of estate planning, wills, trusts and estate administration. She can be reached at ESWalker@mmcanby.com.