

# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE CARE OF YOUR PETS

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For many of us our pets are important members of the household. However, most animal owners have no plans for the care of their special companions in the event of the pet owner's incapacity or death. If you were to leave your home and not return who has the knowledge, access, motivation and resources to care for your pet(s)? Lack of planning can be catastrophic to your pet(s). Larger animals, such as horses, longer living animals, such as birds, and animals with special needs can be especially vulnerable. Many assisted living or nursing home facilities will not allow pets or no more than one pet.

## **WHY PLAN FOR YOUR PET?**

As a pet owner, you want the best for your pets. When the day comes that you are no longer able to provide for the care of your pets, your estate plan can ensure that your wishes are known to those who will care for your pets. Proper planning can provide for the care of your pets not only in the event of death, but also for incapacity or temporary emergencies. Planning can lead to peace of mind, so you can rest assured that your pets will be cared for in the way that you desire.

## **APPOINTING A CAREGIVER**

In your plan, you will name the person who will be the caregiver for your pets. You can also name back-up caregivers or provide methods for finding a caregiver in the event that the person selected cannot take care of your pets.

## **GIVE DIRECTIONS FOR CARE**

You can provide directions regarding your pet's medical conditions, health care, exercise needs, dietary needs, preferred veterinarian, and burial. Provisions for immediate access to your home for caregivers can be made.

## **PROVIDE FUNDS FOR CARE**

You can create a trust to protect the money that is designated for the care of your pets and ensure that it lasts for the duration of your pet's life. A trust is better than an outright gift of money to a caregiver because assets in a trust are not subject to the caregiver's creditors, marital disputes or bankruptcy. Also, if you leave an outright gift of money to a person in your will for the care of your pets, the money goes to that person's beneficiaries at his or her death and may not be available for the care of your pets.

## **APPOINTING A TRUSTEE**

If you want to, you can appoint a different person to oversee the ongoing care of your pets to ensure that the caregiver is treating your pet in the manner that you set out in the trust. Appointing a separate trustee allows for a double-check and ensures that the money you have left is properly used for the care of your pets. If there are any funds remaining after your pet's death, the trustee will ensure that these funds are distributed in the manner designated in your plans.

## **HOW WE CAN HELP**

The laws of the state of Texas allow for trusts for the care of pets or other animals for the life of

the animal. We will work with you to design the legal documents to take advantage of these laws for your pet's protection. Your estate plan should take into account your wishes for the care of your family, your pets, and your property. Once your documents are in place, we will provide you with a card to keep in your wallet to help guarantee that someone can begin to care for your pets as soon as possible.