



PLANNING **FOR YOUR PETS**

BY SARAH LINN

2020 made it very clear that those “someday” situations we plan for could happen sooner than anticipated. Taking the time to think through your wishes for your pets in the event of a human emergency could make all the difference when unexpected situations come up. At Dane County Humane Society (DCHS), we often work with people after an emergency or loved one’s death.

Use the following steps to ensure your pet will be well cared for no matter the situation.

Short-Term and Emergency Situations

If you become very ill, end up being hospitalized, or are otherwise unable to care for your pets, you’ll need people who can help right away.

1. Find two responsible people who agree to serve as temporary caregivers to your pets. You can ask household members, family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors; also consider local pet sitters, groomers, doggie day

care, and boarding facilities who know your pet.

2. Once you have found people who agree to be your pets’ temporary caregivers, take the next steps to help your pets get the care they need right away.

- a. Make sure that these caregivers have access to your home, including keys or codes for door locks and security systems.

- b. Inform your caregivers of the best ways to contact each other. That communication will allow them to make sure the pets are being cared for no matter what comes up.
 - c. Place your pet caregivers’ names and contact information in your wallet and post them in your home for emergency personnel to find if you are incapacitated.
3. Create a go bag for your pets. This bag should include everything that your pet caregivers will need for up to two weeks.
 - a. Name and contact information for all pet caregivers and vet clinics.
 - b. Food, treats, a leash, toys, and any other supplies needed.
 - c. A crate or carrier to transport your pet.
 - d. Vaccination records.
 - e. Medications and prescriptions.
 - f. Daily care instructions.

Long-term or Permanent Changes

In the event of serious illness or death, naming a long-term or permanent caregiver will help your pet transition smoothly to a new loving home.

1. Consider people in your circle who will be able to provide a

good home to your pets. Have at least two trusted people who agree to care for your pets long-term.

2. Talk about your wishes with friends and family to be sure that everyone knows what you believe will be best for your pets. This helps them feel confident in carrying out your wishes.
3. When creating your will or trust, be sure to incorporate your wishes for emergency and long-term pet care. This is one of the easiest ways to make sure that the arrangements you’ve made for your pets are known and carried out. It’s also an opportunity for you to designate funds to help pay for your pets’ future care needs.

Common Questions for Long-term Pet Care

1. *Can I leave my pet to an organization?* It’s best to have a friend or family member in place, but humane societies and similar organizations can help find a new home for your pets.
2. *Can I have my pet put to sleep when I die?* The instinct to do whatever you can to protect your pet from bad situations is understandable. However, even if this request is included in a legal document, it’s usually overturned after the pet owner’s death. The only situations where this type of request is carried out would be

when euthanasia is considered the most humane option for the animal.

3. *How can I be sure that my wishes will be carried out after I’m gone?* Make sure to include your wishes for your pet in your will and other end-of-life documents. DCHS has partnered with FreeWill to give all of our supporters an easy way to write your legally valid will in 20 minutes or less. As you consider your loved ones, FreeWill takes into account your pets, making sure they are taken care of no matter what. This tool is completely free to use, so get started on your plans today at freewill.com/dchs.

Early planning will help you rest easy no matter what is coming next. With these plans in place, your pets will be taken care of in your absence. For more information on wills and trusts, visit resources.bestfriends.org/article/estate-planning-dogs-and-cats and aspc.org/pet-care/pet-planning.

Sarah Linn is the development and marketing supervisor at Dane County Humane Society.

Photographs provided by Dane County Humane Society.



Dane County Humane Society
 5132 Voges Rd.
 Madison, WI 53718
 (608) 838-0413
giveshelter.org