



Remembering your pets in your Will

Ten important steps for planning the future care of your pets when you're no longer by their side.



Planning for your furry friend's care in the future

There is something so magical about the bond that exists between pets and the humans that care for them. These special companion animals offer endless unconditional love and loyal friendship as we navigate the different stages of life together. They are an important and integral part of our family.

Our precious companions give so much love during our lifetime together. Putting a plan in place for their care in the future is a beautiful way of returning the love to them in what is likely to be a very stressful and confusing time for your pets.

This guide was created for animal lovers and pet owners like you – kind and thoughtful people who want to make sure their beloved pets are taken care of when they're no longer around to care for them themselves.

No one knows your pet quite like you do. Taking the time to leave behind clear instructions and create a pet care plan will allow others to take over the care for your special dog or cat as you would, once you're gone.



Pets and the law

Despite the joke that people often make about wanting to leave everything that they own to their cat or dog, here in Australia you can't actually provide directly to your pets in your Will. However, you can make sure that they are well cared for by choosing a pet guardian to look after them once you pass away.

Because we all consider our pets to be part of our family, it may come as a surprise to learn that in Australia, legally, pets are considered to be your property. And like other property you own, you can choose to 'gift' a pet to someone in your Will. You'll need to carefully consider the best way to do this and decide who is the best person to inherit your pet. Which is why we've created this practical guide to help you with your thinking and planning.

We think this planning is a really important part of being a responsible pet parent – we hope that this information helps you plan the best possible care for your pet and gives you peace of mind for the future.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this guide is not legal advice and is not a substitute for proper legal advice. For legal advice, please consult a solicitor that specialises in drafting Wills and providing advice about estate planning.





1. Choosing your pet guardian

Pets, just like young children, cannot support and care for themselves. They need someone special to care for them, protect them, love them and to look after their health.










If there is someone in your life or in your network that you trust to care for your precious pet, you can ask them to take and look after your pet after you've passed. If they agree, you should then name them clearly in your Will.

Leaving your pet guardian some clear, easy-to-understand instructions can help them to better care for your pet. You could also consider leaving them a gift of money, so that they can use those funds to look after your pet.

The person that you entrust with the future care of your pet must be both willing and capable of giving your dearest companion the love and support that they'll need.



Things to think about when choosing your pet guardian:

-  The welfare and wellbeing of your pet is the most important thing to think about – what do you think will be best for them and cause them the least amount of stress and anxiety?
-  Is there someone who already knows your pet and interacts with them regularly? Do they have enough time and patience to care for your pet?
-  Will they have the capacity to care for your pet for the remainder of its life?
-  Do they have a suitable home environment in which your pet can comfortably live?
-  Do they have any pets of their own? If so, how do they interact with your pet?
-  Will they be able to access your home and care for your pet immediately after you've passed away?
-  If not, perhaps think about appointing a temporary pet carer who can then arrange to transfer the care of your pet to someone else permanently later on.
-  If you don't have any obvious candidates in your family or friendship circle, perhaps there's someone else, like a trusted neighbour, local pet sitter or dog walker who helps you care for your pet currently?
-  Consider naming a secondary or substitute pet guardian, just in case the first person you nominate passes away before you or they can no longer care for your pet when the time comes.



Nominating your trusted local animal charity

Think carefully about the best way to re-home your pet – one that will be the least stressful and least complicated for them. We strongly recommend naming someone you know to be your pet's guardian.

If you really can't find anyone suitable to nominate as your pet's guardian, as a last resort you could think about making arrangements with the Executor you've named in your Will to surrender your pet to a local, trusted animal charity or volunteer group. Some charities may be able to help your pet find a new forever home, adopting them to an animal lover just like you.

It's best to discuss the re-homing options with your chosen animal charity or volunteer group before making plans, to ensure it's something that they can do. It's likely that your local council may also need to be involved with the legal transfer of registration of your pet.

It could be quite some time after your passing that your Executor can get in touch with your chosen animal charity. You should ensure that you have more immediate arrangements in place for the care and welfare of your pet in the short term.

Also bear in mind that most animal charities have been set-up to care for vulnerable, stray or neglected pets that are in desperate need of help – they may not have the capacity to provide the level of care for your pet that you would ideally like.





"With Buddy by my side, it feels like there's a little bit of Stan still with me."

Barry, Stan & Buddy – a special connection

Barry and his late partner Stan adopted a total of four dogs from The Lost Dogs' Home over the years – adopting their last dog, Buddy, together back in 2009.

Buddy has given so much unconditional love to Barry, providing companionship as well as being a comforting connection for Barry after Stan's passing. Now, after 15 years of unwavering love and loyalty, Buddy needs a little extra care himself.

As he gets older, Buddy's hearing and eyesight is not what it used to be and he needs regular medication for his arthritis. Which is why Barry needed to think carefully about who would be the best person to take care of Buddy if he was ever unable to care for him.

In the end, this was a relatively easy decision for Barry, as he happily told us, *"I've left instructions in my Will and made arrangements for my brother and sister-in-law to take Buddy and care for him as part of their family once I'm gone."*

Barry now knows his loyal dog's care will continue for the rest of Buddy's life, not just his own.

Barry has also kindly included a special bequest gift in his Will to support the work of The Lost Dogs' Home in the future. Barry's thoughtful gift is being left in loving memory of Stan and all of the faithful dogs that they adopted together from the Home over the years.



"It was such a simple way of saying a big thank you to the charity for bringing so much joy and love into our lives. My final gift will help the Home to continue providing care to lost pets in the future."



2. How to care for your pet through your Will

Your Will is a special way to ensure that everyone you love in your life is well cared for after you've passed away, including your furry friends. Since your pet can't legally inherit anything from you directly, here's how you can make sure that they get the love and care they deserve, even after you're gone.

Here are three easy steps for you to take to make sure that your pet is well cared for when you pass away:



Leave clear instructions in your Will about who you want to look after them

In your Will you can 'gift' your pet to a family member, close friend or someone you know who loves your pet as much as you do. Make sure that you discuss this with them in advance and that they're happy to take on this important role of pet guardian.

It's also very important that the people around you who may be involved in making arrangements after you pass away are fully aware of your final wishes and any plans that you've put in place for your pet. It starts with having clear conversations with those special people in your life.



Think about leaving a financial gift for your pet's care

Alongside naming a pet guardian, you can choose to leave some money to help them cover the future costs for your pet's food, vet bills and ongoing care. You can estimate the approximate costs that they may face based on your own experience and then consider your pet's future needs too.



If you're unable to find a suitable pet guardian, you can consider rehoming your pet through a local, trusted animal charity

If there's nobody in your circle of family, friends or neighbours that can take on the responsibility of caring for your pet, you can instruct your Executor to surrender your pet to a trusted local animal charity.

Remember, while animal charities will always try to do their very best to care for animals that are surrendered into their care, entrusting your pet to someone who is already familiar with them and has agreed to care for them in advance is probably going to be the best option.

Select an animal charity that you know and trust, ideally that is local to where you and your pet live – as this will likely cause the least amount of disruption and stress to your pet.

Marion & Robbie – big cat love



"I'm totally devoted to Robbie, the cheeky rascal that he is! But I'm 93 now and I've been thinking quite a lot about the time when I will no longer be around to care for him."



When Marion adopted Robbie, she had no idea her once tiny little kitten (and her love for him) would grow quite so much. Now weighing-in at over 7kg, Robbie is almost too big for Marion to carry. But he fills Marion's life with lots of companionship and love.

Robbie has given her so much over the years, so she wanted to make sure he will be properly cared for once she passes away or is unable to care for him anymore.

Marion joked, *"Robbie is such a big cat, I do often think that I should ask the Zoo to look after him once I've gone!"*

Luckily for everyone, Marion has made some more practical arrangements with the Executor of her Will to make sure Robbie is left in the care of her chosen pet guardian. She's also created a helpful pet profile for Robbie's future carers – so he'll still be surrounded by love and care once she can't be there to look after him herself.

Marion, like many animal lovers, has also thoughtfully included bequest gifts to her favourite animal charities in her Will, including a very kind gift to the Home. Much of the care we provide to lost pets at the Home relies on kind gifts just like those included in Marion's Will.



3. Suggested wording for providing instructions about the future care of your pet in your Will

By way of an example, here's what a pet care instruction clause could look like in your Will:



"I give any pet animals that I own at the time of my death, presently residing at [insert your home address], to [insert your chosen pet guardian's full name] with the request that they care for them as companion animals.

If [insert your chosen pet guardian's full name] predeceases me, or if [insert your chosen pet guardian's full name] refuses this inheritance because they are unwilling or unable to provide a home for my pet, then I designate [insert alternative pet guardian's full name] as the alternative beneficiary to care for my pet(s).

At the time of my death, should there be no member of my family or a friend who is willing and able to properly care for my surviving pet(s), I direct that my Executor make arrangements to surrender my surviving pet(s) to [insert name of your trusted local animal charity] with a request that they try to find them a loving new home through their pet adoption services."



There are two important things to think about when it comes to adding a pet care provision clause in your Will.

-  It's usually better not to specifically name your current pet in your Will. If your current pet passes away before you or should you add another pet to your family, it could cause some confusion. It's best to refer to "any pets that I own at the time of my death".
-  Always choose a primary pet guardian and a backup or alternative pet guardian, just in case your first choice changes their mind or cannot accept your pet for whatever reason after you've passed away.

4. Preparing your pet's own Pet Profile

After leaving clear instructions about who will be responsible for the future care of your pet when you're no longer there, the next step is to create a practical **Pet Profile** for each of your pets.

By adding in all the special details about your pet, you will help your pet's future caregivers understand their unique needs and preferences. This helpful information about them will also help your pet quickly settle into their new life with their new family, without you by their side.

To help you make a start on taking this important step, we've included a blank Pet Profile for you to fill out today.

You can store this important document alongside your Will and any other papers relating to your pet's care, so it's ready for when it's needed.



5. Things to include in your pet's Pet Profile

Leaving some helpful and practical suggestions for how someone new can best take over the care for your pet is a great way to make sure that this new relationship gets off to the best possible start. Your insights and helpful suggestions can help your pet's care continue as seamlessly as possible after you've gone.

-  Diet and feeding routine – their favourite food or treats, meal times, information about any special diets
-  Medications and instructions on medicating
-  Health issues and anything medical that needs to be understood
-  Exercise and activity routine, favourite places to visit
-  Your pet's preferred games, activities and toys
-  Veterinary clinic contact details
-  Details of your pet sitter or dog walker (if you have one)
-  Microchip number and how to update your pet's details
-  A list of your pet's belongings that will be needed to care for them – leads, harness, bedding, toys, scratching posts, carry cases
-  A note about any little quirks and behaviours that make your pet special and unique
-  Things they love doing, things they may be scared of or things that they don't like
-  How they behave and interact with other animals
-  Where they are used to sleeping and their preferred bedtime routine
-  Details of your local council registration
-  How to handle your pet and show them affection
-  Details of your pet groomer (if you have one)
-  Pet insurance details
-  Any funeral or cremation plans you have for your pet



Deborah, Raphael & Gretel – keeping the family together

"After losing my brother and then my mother, I started to wonder who would care for my gorgeous dogs when I wasn't around anymore to look after them."



Deborah's love for her two dogs is so strong, she wanted to make sure they would always be cared for – and remain together – if they outlived her.

Like many people, Deborah has no family living nearby to take over the care of her pets. Her relatives live in different states.

As she lived nearby, she reached out to The Lost Dogs' Home to discuss her options. Together we decided that the best option was for her to leave instructions in her Will to give her Executor access to her property to temporarily care for any pets that she had living with her at the time of her passing.

Her Executor would then arrange a convenient time to surrender her pets into the care of The Lost Dogs' Home. Her preference is that the charity would help to find them loving new homes, ideally to be re-homed together as a bonded pair.

"I just wanted peace of mind, so that when the time comes for my dogs to find a new home with a new family, that things would be properly taken care of."



Deborah has always been a dog lover – their personality and unconditional love and affection has brought her and her family so much joy over the years. Today, Deborah and her doggy companions, Gretel and Raphael, are one big happy family.

Deborah has also kindly included a gift to the Home in her Will to help us continue to be around long into the future, helping pets in need of finding a new forever home, just like her own.

6. Tell the people who matter the most

Let your solicitor, Executors, family members, close friends and neighbours know all about any plans you put in place for the future care of your pet.

If everyone around you knows what to do with your pet when you pass away, it will be smoother and less stressful for your pet and allow them to more quickly settle into their new home after you've gone.



7. Other legal considerations

Consult with your solicitor to make sure your Will clearly reflects your wishes and instructions.

If you're concerned about your pet's future family being able to afford their care, you might consider asking your solicitor about other ways that you could leave instructions in your Will to help cover the future costs for your pet's care.

You can nominate a trusted person in your Will to manage the funds and provide clear instructions to them to use the funds for your pet's future care and to meet their ongoing needs after you've passed away.

8. Including your pet in your future estate planning

It's important to keep all of your estate documents and your Will up to date to ensure your pet's future is going to be secure and happy.

If your circumstances change or there is a change in your pet or their health, please make sure that this is reflected in your latest Will and any instructions that you leave behind for their future care.

9. What will happen to your pet in the event of an emergency?

It's one thing to make plans for what you want to happen with your pet after you've passed away, but having a similar plan in place for your pet in the case of emergencies is also crucial.

Knowing that they'll be safe and looked after if you're taken into hospital or if you suddenly become too ill to care for them yourself will avoid any additional worry in what is likely to be an already stressful time for everyone.

Your emergency pet carer does not necessarily need to be the same person as the pet guardian that you name in your Will. They can be another trusted friend who lives nearby or a friendly neighbour. As long as they have a key to your home (or can easily gain access to your home in the event of an emergency) and can visit to care for your pet at short notice.

Once your emergency pet carer has agreed to take on this responsibility, discuss ways that you can make it as easy as possible for them with a good **Emergency Care Plan** for your pet. An **Emergency Care Plan** is simply a written list of important information about your pet including their diet, exercise routine, toileting needs and any medications they may need.

We've included a blank Emergency Care Plan for you to complete for your own pet. You can include all the important information that will be needed to care for your pet in the event of an emergency.



10. Consider including a gift for The Lost Dogs' Home in your Will

Making a proper care plan for your pet and preparing for any other emergencies will ensure they'll be well cared for after you're gone.

Sadly there are thousands of other pets who are not lucky enough to have a pet parent as thoughtful and as considerate as you. These innocent lost, abandoned and neglected pets also need love and support so that they can live the happy and healthy lives that they truly deserve.



Did you know that each year more than half of the donations that we use to care for lost and abandoned pets comes from kind gifts left in the Wills of animal lovers and thoughtful pet parents just like you?

As a charity that receives no ongoing government funding, we rely on the generosity and support of the kind animal-loving community to help care for the thousands of lost, stray, abandoned and neglected pets who come through our doors each year.

Including a kind bequest gift to the Home to care for the next generation of lost pets is such an easy, yet powerful thing that any animal lover can do.

Here is some suggested wording you may wish to consider using if you do kindly choose to remember the Home in your Will:

*"I give to The Lost Dogs' Home, (ABN 84 004 789 726) of 2 Gracie Street, North Melbourne, Victoria 3051 a gift of **[insert your choice of a figure]** percent share of my residuary estate for its general purposes."*



Speak to your solicitor or contact us

If you have any questions about planning for your pet's future care or would like to know more about including a gift to The Lost Dogs' Home in your Will, you can get in touch with your solicitor to discuss your final wishes or contact us directly at the Home.

To set up a convenient time to chat, please contact our friendly Gifts in Wills Team on **(03) 8379 4496** or email your queries about including a bequest or leaving instructions in your Will to **wills@dogshome.com**

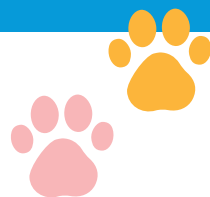
We'd love to hear from you.



Final words of wisdom

Whatever path you decide upon, it's important that you take some time now to think carefully about the future care of your pet.

Leaving clear instructions and having thorough discussions with the people around you can help ensure your pet is well cared for as you would wish after you're gone.



For more information about including a gift in your Will to The Lost Dogs' Home, please contact our friendly Gifts in Wills Team.

Email: wills@dogshome.com

Phone: (03) 8379 4496

Website: www.dogshome.com/wills



Considered to be one of Australia's longest-standing, busiest and most-trusted animal charities, The Lost Dogs' Home has cared for hundreds of thousands of dogs, cats, puppies and kittens since we were first founded back in 1910.

We take in lost, abandoned or neglected pets and give them the care and love that they deserve – always seeking to do the best for each animal that comes through our doors and giving lost pets the best possible chance of having a happy and healthy life in the future.



Create your pet's **Emergency Care Plan**

What is a Emergency Care Plan?

An Emergency Care Plan for your pet is a document to ensure you have all of your pet's information in one place in case you are suddenly unable to care for them.

Who should I nominate as the emergency carer for my pet?

An emergency carer should be able to care for the immediate needs of your pet if you're suddenly unable to. They can be family or a friend who lives nearby or a trusted neighbour. They should have a key to your home (or can easily gain access to your home in the event of an emergency) and can visit your pet at short notice. It's important to talk to the person you would like to nominate, to make sure they understand and agree to your pet's care requirements.

Why is having an Emergency Care Plan for your pet so important?

Having an emergency care plan in place for your pet can give you peace of mind. It'll provide comfort knowing your pet will be properly cared for by friends or family, and removes any worry in what may already be a stressful time for you and your pet.

Where should I keep my pet's Emergency Care Plan?

It is important to keep your pet's Emergency Care Plan in a prominent place in your home such as on the fridge or on a notice board.

You should also leave copies with the people you've nominated as your pet's emergency carers. This will ensure your friends and family will be able to find your pet's care plan quickly and easily in the event of an emergency.

My pet's Emergency Care Plan:

This plan is for use in an emergency when I am unable to care for my pet's immediate needs. Please contact the nominated emergency contact below:



Emergency Pet Carer Contact 1:

Name:

Phone numbers:

Access to my property:

☐ They have a key to enter my property ☐ They have my permission to organise a locksmith

Emergency Pet Carer Contact 2:

Name:

Phone numbers:

Access to my property:

☐ They have a key to enter my property ☐ They have my permission to organise a locksmith

My Pet's Details:

Name:

Type of animal and breed:

Age:

Colour:

Gender:

☐ M ☐ F

Home address:

Vet details:

My pet's microchip number:

Current medications:

Please walk/play with them: ☐ Three times a day ☐ Twice a day ☐ Daily

Toys / lead / harness location:

Please feed them: ☐ Three times a day ☐ Twice a day ☐ Daily

Food amount and food and feeding bowls location:

My Pet's Profile information can be found:

PLEASE NOTE: My pet could be quite upset or distressed under these circumstances. Please take extra care and give them lots of love and attention until my return.

Thank you 



My Pet's Profile



Preparing a practical Pet Profile about your much-loved companion can help their future carers provide the best possible care for your furry friend when you're no longer around to care for them yourself.

Sharing all of the things you know about your beloved pet on this form gives you the peace of mind that you're helping to make sure that they can remain as happy and healthy as possible after you're gone.

Attach your favourite photo of your pet here

For:

Add your pet's name and description here

My pet's feeding routine

Please feed them: ☐ Three times a day ☐ Twice a day ☐ Daily

Their usual food:

Their favourite treats:

My pet's health information

Their health issues:

Their current medications:

Their allergies:

My pet's exercise routine

Please walk/play with them: ☐ Three times a day ☐ Twice a day ☐ Daily

They like to go to and play:

.....

They know these words or commands

.....

.....

.....



My Pet's Profile



My pet's microchip number is:

Their council registration details are:

My pet's special little quirks:

.....

They prefer sleeping in:

Preferred bedtime:

They don't like it when:

.....

They love:

.....

They are afraid of:

Their birthday is:

List of their belongings:

.....

Pet sitter or dog walker:

Their usual vet details:

Emergency vet details:

Pet insurance details:

.....

If they pass away while in your care, please:

.....