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A NEWSLETTER FROM

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Estate Planning With Pets

We adore our pets and value our relationships with them. These bonds, like those we share with our human family members, prompt us to worry about their well-being after we die. Fortunately, you may use a variety of legal tools and best practices to ensure your pet's long-term care.

Taking these steps will give you peace of mind that your pet will be cared for, and will allow you to more fully enjoy your pet's companionship while you are still alive. Make sure you are prepared so that you don't leave the emotional burden of this decision to your loved ones.

Build a relationship with a trusted veterinarian

While wrestling with euthanasia scenarios, you will find it helpful to consult with a veterinarian. A veterinarian can



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counsel you about critical information concerning your pet's estimated life span, predisposition to certain illnesses, future veterinary costs, and different euthanasia and burial procedures. This information will inform and empower you to make the right decisions while drafting the Pet Trust.

Moreover, regular visits will keep your veterinarian informed about your pet's ongoing health status. This up-to-date perspective makes it easier for your veterinarian to advise your Trustee and caretaker about veterinary care options.

Get your pet chipped, vaccinated, and spayed or neutered

While consulting with your veterinarian, remember to inquire about chipping, vaccinations, spaying, and neutering. This will make things much easier for your Trustee and caretaker.

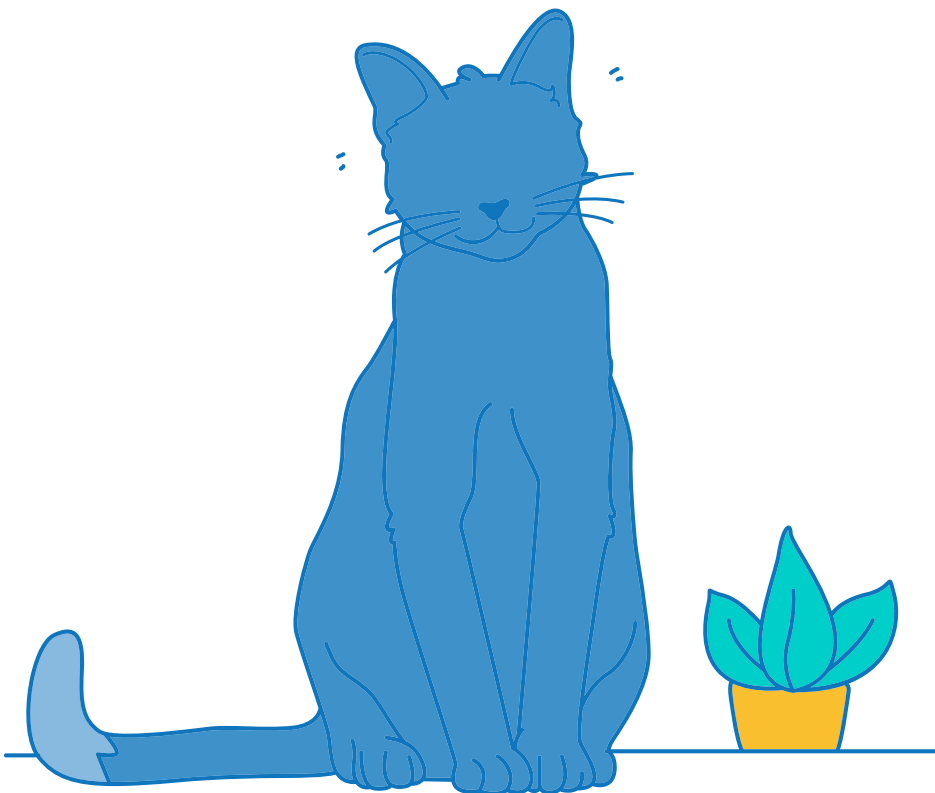
Getting chipped will make Fluffy's identification easy and unambiguous. You should reference her given name, chip number, breed, and coloring to identify her in the Pet Trust. Your Trustee will then feel assured about distributing funds to the proper animal. Further, the chip makes veterinary

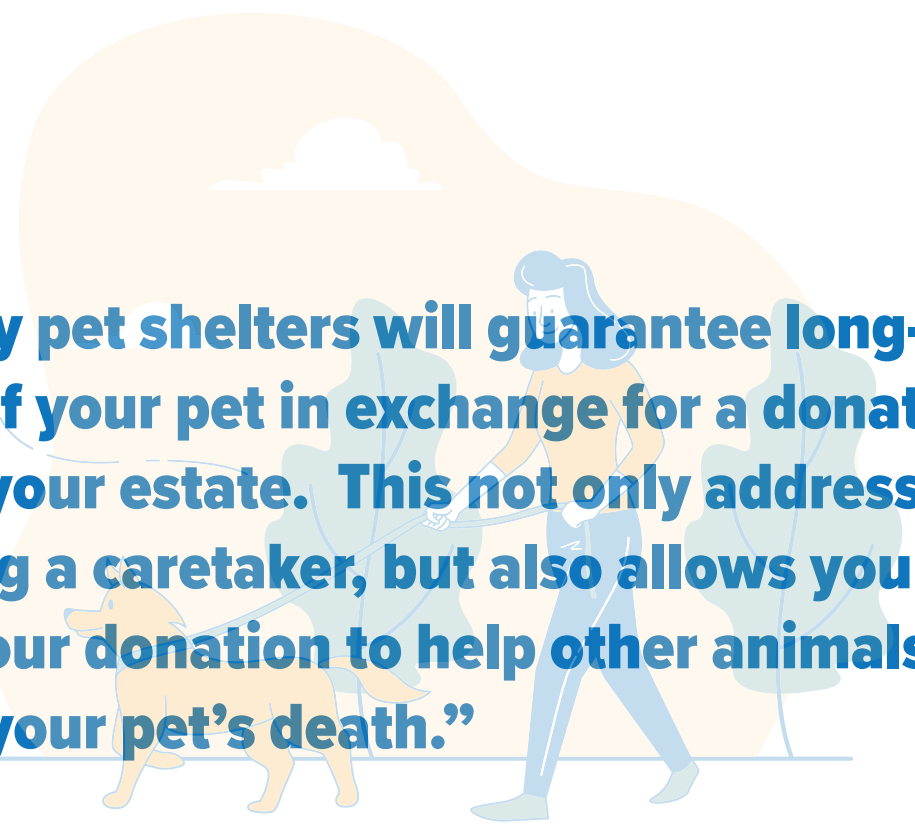
records much easier to track, organize, and transmit. This will facilitate Fluffy's veterinary care, especially if the caretaker lives in another city and will visit a different clinic.

And, if you have not done so already, get your pet vaccinated and spayed or neutered. This lightens the caretaker's load, and is a good practice for most pet owners anyway, regardless of Trust planning considerations.

Assess liability risks and research insurance options

You do not want your pet to create personal liability for the caretaker. To address this, you should research the insurance costs associated with your pet's particular breed. This information will help you more precisely estimate how much money to leave to the Trustee after you die. In the Pet Trust instrument, you can then empower the Trustee to purchase pet liability insurance using Trust funds. This will put everyone's mind at ease.





“Many pet shelters will guarantee long-term care of your pet in exchange for a donation from your estate. This not only addresses finding a caretaker, but also allows you to use your donation to help other animals after your pet’s death.”

Research animal shelter programs and donate

What if you have plenty of money to fund a Pet Trust, but cannot find a caretaker? In that case, a Pet Trust might not be the right choice. Instead, you should research animal shelter programs to see if one might satisfy your needs. Many pet shelters will guarantee long-term care of your pet in exchange for a donation from your estate. This not only addresses finding a

caretaker, but also allows you to use your donation to help other animals after your pet’s death. If you choose to do this, you should coordinate your estate plan drafting with the shelter to ensure that everything accords.

Professional breeders should consider corporate options

If you breed animals professionally, a Pet Trust might not address your unique needs. Instead, you should consider organizing your business as a corporate

entity such as a Limited Liability Company (“LLC”). Well-drafted corporate documents that govern your LLC should discuss the continued operation and ownership of your business. This will permit the co-owners to smoothly transition the business after you die, including maintaining ownership of any animals. 📌

Illustration by Designs.ia

7 Everyday Ways to Increase the Security of Your Home

1. Upgrade your front door.

- Your front door is the main point of access to your home, but you may never have given it much thought other than what color to paint it. For enhanced security, your front door should have:
 - A solid core of wood, metal or fiberglass. If you're not sure what you have, just knock on the door. A solid door will sound solid; a hollow door will echo.
 - A deadbolt, with a solid metal strike plate (the piece that is attached to the door frame where the deadbolt fits). If you are concerned that the lock and/or the strike plate is weak, you can buy a kit to reinforce both the door and the frame, for less than \$100.
 - A wide-angle peephole.



doors and windows locked when you are home; to lock them when you leave; and to check that they are locked before you go to bed. Remember to lock all the doors, including the interior door that leads from the house to the garage. Help the entire family get into this habit, so you know these things will be done, even when you're not home to do them.

- To prevent entry through a sliding glass door, insert

a wooden dowel or metal rod into the track at the bottom of the door. Alternatively, for around \$20, you can purchase a "security bar" that serves the same purpose. Both methods will keep the door securely closed, even if the lock is compromised.

- To prevent entry through the garage, keep your garage door closed at all times when you are not in the garage or nearby. Keep any side entrances locked. If your garage

2. Lock it up.

- Make it a habit to keep the

door has keycode access, change the code when you first move in to your home and periodically thereafter.

3. Light it up, inside and out.

- Don't let your home go dark at night. If you are going out and you know you won't be home until after sunset, leave a light (or several lights) on in the house.
- Make sure the exterior of your home is well lit at night. You know you need a porch light, but you also need lighting at the back door and around all sides of the house. Consider adding motion-sensor lights to provide extra illumination in dark corners and out-of-the-way areas that are not easily viewed from the street.

4. Be a good neighbor.

- Get to know your neighbors and keep an eye out for each other. One way to do this is to form a neighborhood watch association. Ask your local police department if an officer is available to come to your home for an informal meeting. The officer can offer tips about home security, how to recognize suspicious behavior and criminal activity, and what to do in case of an emergency.

5. Bring packages in promptly.

- If you are home when a package is delivered, bring it in promptly. If you are expecting a package to be delivered while you're out, ask a neighbor who is home during the day if he would mind taking the package to

his house until you return.

6. Don't hide a key.

- Everyone knows there is a key hidden under the mat or the planter or that fake rock. Instead, give a spare set of keys to a couple of your neighbors and/or a family member who lives nearby. Do not put your name or house number on the key. Find another memorable way (e.g., a funky key chain) to identify the keys as yours.

7. Hang curtains.

- Curtains are more than just decorative. They are a means of guarding your privacy. Keep the curtains drawn, especially at night, to prevent passerby from peering into your home like a department store window. ■

Illustration by Designs.ia





Make Someone Happy; Send a Thank You Note

Is there a person in your life who deserves your thanks: a teacher or other mentor; a co-worker who showed you the ropes; a family member, friend, or neighbor who stood by you in hard times?

Perhaps the circumstances never gave you the opportunity to express thanks. Or maybe you feel that the person knows you are grateful and would only be embarrassed by your

note. You may also be afraid that you cannot find the right words and the other person will think your note is lame or insincere.

All of us share these fears and they may be holding us back from taking a simple step that will improve our own and others' well-being. Research shows that expressing gratitude is strongly associated with feelings of happiness,

emotional resilience, and strong relationships. Yet people hesitate to do it.

A study by two psychologists looked into this puzzle. Hundreds of study participants (the expressers) wrote brief gratitude emails to people who had a positive impact on their lives (the recipients). These were not the typical thanks for a birthday or holiday gift, but were for things like help



finding a job, or getting into college, or support during a rough patch. The expressers predicted how they thought the notes would be received and the recipients were asked how they actually felt on reading the notes.

The surprising conclusions:

- The expressers significantly underestimated how surprised and pleased the recipients were to be thanked. Many of the recipients reported that they were “ecstatic” to

receive the notes, rating their happiness at 4 out of 5.

- The expressers overestimated how embarrassed or awkward the recipients would feel on reading the notes.
- The expressers significantly underestimated how competent and articulate the recipients perceived the expressers to be. In other words, the recipients of the thank you notes, by and large, were thrilled to get them; did not feel particularly embarrassed or awkward;

and thought the expressers did a good job writing them.

So get out that pen and paper or open your email program. You don’t have to be a Shakespeare or Hemingway. You don’t have to write a book. Just a couple of simple, sincere sentences will do. Many expressers spent less than 5 minutes on their notes. The recipient won’t criticize your prose. Almost certainly, he or she will be delighted to get your note and you will be glad you wrote. 📌

Illustration by Designs.ia

Making the Most of Cold Weather

As the cold season takes its turn in the cycle, you may be wondering what you can do to get outside despite the cold.

There are plenty of fun cold weather activities you can try. Here are some tips to help you make the most of winter.

1. Bundle up!

Cold weather doesn't have to be unbearable, but you do have to prepare for it. Wear layers; you can always lose some later if you get warm. And don't forget the gloves and hat - it will help keep your core temperature warmer.

2. Go sledding!

If there's snow near you, you can enjoy one of the oldest cold weather activities - sledding! Grab a sled and hit the hills. In warmer weather locations, you may be able to even find a hill with artificial snow for sledding or tubing.

3. Go skiing!

If sledding seems boring to you, plan a ski trip! Skiing and snowboarding are thrilling ways to enjoy the snow. However, if it's your first time, you may want to start with a lesson.

4. Go ice skating!

Ice skating is a family friendly activity that can be done indoors or outdoors. You'll stay active enough to keep warm while you glide across the ice.

5. Drink hot chocolate!

If it's simply too cold for you outside, stay inside and drink hot chocolate. To top off the experience, bake some cookies and start a fire, if you can. Enjoy the cold weather through a window while the hot cocoa keeps you warm inside.

Illustrations by Designs.ia

