

Providing for Your Cat After You

Are Gone by Jennifer Williams. Ph.D.



Pet Trusts: Rachel Hirschfeld of New York created The Pet Protection Agreement*™ and The Hirschfeld Pet Trust™. She says that one of the most important things to consider when setting up a pet trust is that you want your cat to get the same level of care for his entire life, even if you are unable to care for him due to injury, illness or death. “A well-written pet trust keeps your cat with you, even if you are ill or incapacitated and provides for your cat’s care.” This means your cat stays with you as long as you are alive, even if you can’t care for him, and provides for him once you are gone.

Currently, pet trusts are legal in 38 states and the District of Columbia. A pet trust is a legal arrangement in which you name a caregiver, designate money for your cat’s care and specify a trustee to administer the trust: giving money to the pet guardian and insuring that the caregiver follows your instructions. In

some states, pet trusts are “honorary” meaning the pet guardian has the option of caring for your cat or not and provides no real protection. Other states offer legally enforceable pet trusts.

Rachel Hirschfeld has developed the Pet Protection Agreement™ (patent pending) which includes a will, trust and a contract with the future caregiver that gives specific instructions for your cat’s care.

Since state laws vary, you need an attorney to interpret the law and set up a pet trust to protect your cat. Rachel recommends that before you visit an attorney, you know who you would like to serve as a trustee as well as a caregiver and that you discuss your plans with them to ensure they’re able and willing to fulfill their responsibilities. First, the possibility of additional end of life medical expenses should be considered in determining the amount of money placed into trust. Second, if your cat dies before all trust funds are expended, the trust should describe how the remaining funds should be distributed. Finally, remember to update your Will as needed. If your pet dies and you get a new one, your trust may need to be revised.

As a cat owner, you want to keep your cats safe. So be sure to research your options and make sure your cats are cared for – even if you aren’t here to do it.

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