

# What About the Animals?

*features*  
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Buying a house, going away on a trip, getting married or having a baby are the most common events that trigger people to think about wills and estate planning. They make arrangements for the children and other family members and carefully plan the disbursement of their funds. Increasingly, people are also arranging for the care and support of their animals.

Unaware of this possibility, many people as they age sadly avoid having pets because they don't know how long they will live and worry about the livelihood of their beloved animals. But even younger people should be concerned. As we all know and as much as we don't like to think about it, anyone could die unexpectedly in an accident without having given any thought as to what would happen to their pets.

It is important to refer to our animals in a will and provide for them. At the very least power should be granted to the Executor to do what is necessary to ensure that they are well cared for. This may include spending the necessary funds to ensure they are in good health and cared for properly. The Executor must be able to house the pets in a good kennel, if necessary, until a loving home can be found. If the will does not specify that the Executor has this discretion, it may not be possible for him/her to spend any money on the pets. For example, there may not be a lot of funds in the estate and the beneficiaries may not be agreeable to

money being spent on animals thereby decreasing the amount of the inheritance. Some pets may need to be groomed, spayed or neutered or have extra training to make them more attractive when finding a good home.

Many of us may not have friends or relatives who are able or willing to care for our animals. In any event, it is possible that friends and relatives are not the best option even though they may agree. The BC SPCA can provide assistance under their *Pet Survivor Care Program* to help ensure that pets find loving homes. This can be a wonderful service in difficult circumstances.

Remember, wills can be changed at any time and should be reviewed and updated as circumstances change. For example, if those named as Executor, beneficiary or care giver for a pet are no longer available or able, the will must be replaced or a properly drawn codicil added.

Having a will means a choice to have pets longer and it brings peace of mind. Dying without a will leaves few options for pet care and with no appointed Executor the Public Guardian and Trustee will be in charge of the estate and the animals. A properly drawn will providing for the pets, coupled with arrangements made with appropriate friends or family or the *BC SPCA Pet Survivor Care Program* will provide peace of mind and one less thing to worry about. 🐾