

Four-Legged “Children” No Barking Matter

Dog ownership is serious business in Houston these days. Doggie divas can get the “spa” treatment, spend their afternoons in doggie daycare, and even run among their own at parks designated specifically for their enjoyment. In my practice, the relationship owners have with their pets does not end with the parks, pooper-scoopers, and the veterinarian visits – it extends beyond the death of the owner.

My clients who own pets typically have carefully thought out who will receive their pet(s) upon their death. In essence, the owners look upon their pets as their four legged minor “children.” In most circumstances, the owners will leave their “children” only to those family members or friends who have proven themselves worthy enough to be entrusted with their “children.” It is also a good idea to leave a certain dollar amount of money to the person who will take care of your pet to ensure your pet will be provided for.

For those clients who do not feel comfortable leaving their “children” to family members or friends, there are other resources to afford your pet a comfortable life. Your veterinarian might know of local shelters that take and care for pets after the owner’s death. The Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine has the Stevenson Companion Animal Life-Care Center for which the sole purpose is to care for animals after the owner’s death. To be accepted at the Center, your pet must be enrolled and an endowment is required to secure your pet’s enrollment. The endowment may be paid at the time of enrollment or as a bequest in your Will. (See the Center’s website for more details.)

So, whether your children are of the two or four-legged variety, feathered friend or the cat’s meow, talk to your attorney about including a plan that provides for their future.

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This Article should NOT be taken as legal, tax, or financial planning advice for your own particular situation. Instead, you should consult with a qualified professional to seek such advice.