



They're not just pets,

they're family.

Without a plan, their future can be uncertain. Your will helps ensure they'll be cared for, even when you're not there.



Public  
Trust

# Why plan for your pets?

---

**Pets are part of our family, but without a plan their future can be uncertain. While it's natural to assume a family member or friend will step in, the reality is not everyone is in a position to take on pets.**

In New Zealand, the law treats pets as property, not people. That means you cannot leave money or assets directly to your pets. But you can leave your pets to someone you trust, along with a sum of money to help with their care and clear care instructions through a statement of wishes that accompanies your will.

A little planning can ensure your pets are cared for in the way you would want, them to be, giving you peace of mind for their future.



Help prepare your pet by ensuring they are familiar with and have a positive relationship with their future caregiver. You want them to have built a strong history of fun, positive interactions before they live together.

---

Maria Alomajan, Accredited Animal Behaviour Consultant

# Choosing the right new guardian

---

Think about who will look after your pets if you're no longer here. You can name a person in your will to take on their care.

What matters most is choosing someone you trust to act in your pet's best interests. Choose a primary guardian (family member, friend or a trusted organisation), as well as a backup if circumstances change.

## Important considerations:

- > Have a conversation with the person (or organisation) before naming them, to confirm they're willing and able to take on the responsibility
- > Check their living situation, lifestyle, other pets and allergies
- > You cannot legally force someone to take your pet, even if named in your will, so always name a backup option
- > Having your pet microchipped makes things easier, especially if there are multiple pets that need rehoming
- > The long-term costs of your pet's care, especially for older or longer-living pets
- > Keep will instructions simple, to ensure your estate can be administered smoothly.

## While you can't leave money directly to your pets, you can:

- > Leave a specific sum of money to the new guardian to help cover food, vet bills, insurance, grooming and other pet care costs
- > Clearly state the gift is intended to support your pet's care, with guidance on how it should be used.

*Note: This type of gift is not legally binding, the new guardian is not obligated to use the funds for pet-related expenses.*

# What if there's no suitable person?

---

Not everyone has a loved one willing to take guardianship of pets. Some people arrange for their pets to go to an animal charity or rescue organisation. It's important to discuss and agree this with the organisation in advance. In your will, you can also leave a specific sum of money to that organisation, so they can rehome and care for your pets. Some organisations, like the SPCA, have programmes set up to help make this easy.

# Keep your will updated

---

Once you've made arrangements for your pets in your will, it's important to update your will when things change, like if a pet passes away, you get a new pet, the guardian changes or your pet develops long-term medical needs. And remember to update your guardian on any changes.

We recommend you review your will every 3-5 years to make sure it still reflects your current circumstances, especially if your pet's needs, or any other aspect of your life, has changed.

It's also good to think about what might happen if you lose mental capacity and are no longer able to care for your pets. An enduring power of attorney (EPA) for property and finances allows you to appoint someone you trust to manage your affairs, including putting things in place for your pet's care.



# Help them keep life familiar

---

Include your pet's care instructions in a [statement of wishes](#) (available from Public Trust) and store along side your will:

Things to consider including in your care instructions:

- > Registration and microchip number
- > Pet insurance details (to be transferred to new guardian)
- > Dietary needs including feeding routines, treats and where to purchase
- > Medication instructions, vaccination records, and any health issues
- > Vet details and medical history
- > Exercise routine
- > Sleep routine including where they sleep
- > Behavioural quirks, fears or training needs, and any special toys
- > A list of words your pet is familiar with, including any words they respond to
- > Pet sitters or dog walker details
- > Any other important details you think will help the new guardian keep life familiar for your pets.

These instructions guide your nominated guardian, even if they're not legally binding.

Doing this can help you feel confident that your pet will be taken care of according to your wishes.

# Your will planner

---

Here are some questions to think about as part of the planning process in writing your will. This planner will help to get your thoughts in order and save time before officially writing your will.

## Step 1. How to estimate the value of your estate.

A/ Your assets	Value \$NZ
Your home	
Your KiwiSaver	
Life insurance policy (owned by you)	
Other property or land	
Cars or other vehicles	
Contents of your home including furniture, antiques, heirlooms	
Money in banks or shares	
<b>Value \$NZ</b>	<b>\$</b>
B/ Your liabilities	Value \$NZ
Your mortgage	
Loans, overdrafts, credit cards and other debts	
Provision for funeral and legal expenses	
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Deduct A – B (assets – liabilities) = The estimated value of your estate</b>	<b>\$</b>

**Step 2. Think about your family and/or friends and any charitable causes you're considering leaving a gift in your will.**

Names	Gift, amount or % share
Residuary beneficiary - The entities that receive any residuary assets that are not specifically left to other named beneficiaries.	

If applicable, think about a testamentary guardian for your dependents and pets.

Names

**Step 3. Consider your executor. Choose your executor carefully as they will be responsible for carrying out your wishes when you pass. If applicable, include details of your solicitor.**

Executor name / solicitor
Back up executor

#### **Step 4. Write your will.**

- > Online by following our step-by-step process – first you need to create an account at **publictrustonline.co.nz**
- > In person by booking an appointment with one of our experts, by calling **0800 371 471** or visiting **publictrust.co.nz/locations**

This document is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to replace a legal will document. It should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional legal advice tailored to your specific circumstances.

