

# THE SKETCHLEY LAW FIRM, P.A.

Providing Compassionate Support & Guidance Through Elder Law & Guardianship

## ESTATE PLANNING FOR PETS

April 2007

Over half of U.S. households own a pet. They are loved and cherished family members. It may be important to include pets in the estate planning process. Including pets ensures they are cared for when an owner is no longer able to do so. Here are some basic estate planning tools for pet owners:

### ***PET OWNER IDENTIFICATION***

Pet Owner Card: Carry a wallet card with the pet's name, type of animal, address, contact information for veterinarian and caregiver (if any) and the location of all pet documents.

Pet Documents: These should include identification documents, veterinarian records and the caretaker's contact information. Keep them with your other important estate planning documents such as your living will or durable power of attorney.

### ***PET CARETAKER***

Pet owners can designate, in writing, a pet caretaker to provide care if the owner is unable to do so

due to incapacity or death. The caregiver should like the pet, be responsible, be able to afford to provide for the pet care (assuming no funds are left in trust for the pet), and agree to be the pet's caretaker. Pet owners can also designate an alternate pet caretaker if their first designee is unable to serve.

### ***TRUST FOR THE CARE OF ANIMAL***

Florida law allows pet owners to create trusts to provide for the care their pets. A trust is a legal entity created either through a written trust agreement or in a person's Last Will and Testament. Funds can be placed in this trust, subject to restrictions and administered by a trustee responsible for using the funds for the pet's care and support. The trustee and the pet caregiver do not have to be the same individual and oftentimes are not for the protection of the pet.

*If you would like one of our attorneys to come and speak to your group or organization about this topic, please contact Tracy Powell at (850) 894-0152. Past newsletters can be found at [www.sketchleylaw.com](http://www.sketchleylaw.com).*