

FACTSHEET

Planning for your cats

Caring for a cat or cats is a commitment made for their lifetime. However, our circumstances can change at any time, and it is important to plan for contingencies should you be unable to care for your cat/s, whether temporarily or permanently.

At the outset, it is important to ensure your cat is desexed, microchipped, and registered. You should keep your contact details on the Companion Animals Register up-to-date. You can do this yourself via the NSW Pet Registry <https://www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au/#/> or contact your local council. Keeping your details current means you can be contacted if your cat is lost and you can use the Pet Registry to notify your cat as missing if they are lost.

Keep your cat's paperwork together in one folder: desexing certificate; microchip and registration papers; vaccination records; and any health records from your vet. Note the dates of flea and worm treatments and the products used. Clearly mark the outside of the folder with the name/s and description/s of your cat/s plus current photo/s (e.g. Honey, 4 year old short-haired tortoiseshell), and the name, address and phone number of your cat's regular vet, as well as the contact details of at least two people (friends or family) who can be contacted to care for the cat/s in case of emergency.

Remember, in some emergencies it may be a stranger trying to deal with the situation so even if you keep an electronic file, a hardcopy should also be kept. The more information that is clearly available, the better. If you live alone, it may be worth keeping this folder in a prominent place (eg by the telephone) to ensure the person is alerted to the fact that a cat lives in the home. If you live alone, you might wish to consider carrying a card in your wallet that, in case of emergency, will alert people to the fact you have pets at home.

NSW Trustee & Guardian have a free pet emergency card; available from Cat Protection or contact NSW Trustee & Guardian <https://www.tag.nsw.gov.au/pets-and-planning-ahead.html>

In your cat's folder, include instructions for the temporary carer of your cat, and instructions regarding your preferences for permanent care.

Document your cat's medical needs (remember to keep these records up-to-date) and also their likes and dislikes. What food do they eat? What are their toileting habits? What type of litter do they use? Be specific in your descriptions; a sudden change in a cat's diet can lead to stomach upsets and a change in the type of litter can cause toileting problems.

The more information you document about your cat, the better they will be cared for by someone else (whether temporarily or permanently) and the greater your peace of mind.

It is important to note that most boarding facilities require a cat to have been vaccinated within the previous 12 months. If you do not vaccinate your cat annually, then be sure to include the most recent vaccination record in the folder plus instructions that the cat must be taken to a vet to be vaccinated prior to boarding (facilities have different policies regarding vaccination so the temporary carer will need to check these).

If you have a regular boarding facility for your cat, include the name and contact details in the folder. If you haven't boarded your cat before, you should research some boarding facilities that you think would be suitable for your cat and include the names and contact details of those facilities. Alternatively, your vet clinic might offer boarding.

You should also include names and contact details of neighbours who might be able to help in an emergency: document what your wishes are for your cat, both for temporary care and permanent care. Remember that even if friends or relatives aren't in a position to provide direct care to your cat, they might be able to coordinate care, for example, by taking your cat to the vet for emergency boarding.

In thinking about these contingencies, consider your cat's temperament, health, age, and needs (for example, if you have a shy, nervous cat you wouldn't want to rehome them to a boisterous household with young children) as well as financial matters. For example, can you afford to have your cat privately boarded in the event of being temporarily unable to care for them? If not, is there a neighbour you can call upon to come to your home and feed your cat and check up on them regularly?

With respect to permanent care, you might know someone who is prepared to look after your cat, or someone who is prepared to provide temporary care while finding a permanent home for your cat. Cat Protection is a no-kill, limited admission shelter and we may be able to assist in rehoming your cat but not necessarily immediately. It is important if your wish is to have your cat rehomed that you have provided for someone to care for the cat temporarily. You also need to be realistic and thoughtful about your wishes for your cat. If the cat is shy, elderly, frail and has only ever known one home, it might be kinder to have your vet put them to sleep at home rather than subjecting the cat to multiple, stressful moves. You know your cat best and their needs will change over time; you'll need to update your instructions about their future care accordingly.

You can leave instructions regarding your wishes for your cat in your Will, but as the law regards animals as property it is not as simple as leaving some money to a person to care for your cat. This area of law is complex, and you should consult a solicitor or trustee company to discuss your wishes.

Never nominate people to care for your cat unless you have discussed the matter with them first, and make sure you keep their names and contact details up-to-date. **Once you have created your cat's folder regularly review it to make sure the information is still current and correct. A little planning will go a long way to ensure your cat's wellbeing.**

While all care has been taken in preparing this document, it is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice

Checklist for your cat's folder

- Cat's name and photo
- Colour/breed/longhair/medium hair/shorthair/any other identifying features
- Date of birth (or estimate)
- Desexed M/F (attach desexing certificate if you have it)
- Microchip number (attach registration papers if you have them)
- Registered owner (as recorded on NSW Pet Registry)
- Emergency contact 1
 - Name
 - Relationship to you
 - Address
 - Phone numbers
- Emergency contact 2
 - Name
 - Relationship to you
 - Address
 - Phone numbers
- Cat's vet
 - Name
 - Address
 - Phone numbers
- Cat's boarding facility
 - Name
 - Address
 - Phone numbers
- Cat's preferred food (brand; flavour; wet/dry) amount and frequency of meals
- Cat's preferred litter (brand and type)
- Cat's toileting habits (changes to toileting routine can indicate stress or illness)
- Cat's flea and worm treatments (brand, dose, frequency)
- Cat's temperament/personality

Attach health records and details of any medications

Attach description of how you would like your cat to be cared for during a temporary emergency or permanently in the event you will be unable to care for them again. Explain where the funds will come from to pay for that care. If you have provided someone with enduring guardianship or power of attorney, list them here; also list the name of your lawyer and/or the executor of your will. **It is recommended that you consult a professional to advise you on planning ahead documents.**