



It's All About the Animals!

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Friends of White County Animals President, Sharon Langford, recently sat down with Attorney John Knowles for a conversation about helping people plan for the care of their animals if they become unable to care for them because of health or death.

Talking with Attorney John Knowles

Sharon Langford:

You helped me when planning for my rescues, so I wanted to get you to share your expertise and wisdom with other people. I'm in shelters and with rescue groups very often and have been for many years and there are quiet a few dogs and cats who end up in rescue groups or in shelters because there was no plan made for them when their owner either died or became unable to care for them, so we wanted to get information out to people to help them plan for their pets.

John Knowles:

Well, their Will would be a good place to start. Of course, everybody is recommended to have a Will to say what happens to their property and also their pets, if they choose. What happens after they pass away, and one of the things that's a little uncertain, is life, and sometimes old folks die suddenly and sometimes they have long illnesses and anything in between but especially elderly people have support animals; friends that they have made have dogs and cats and will make sure they will be taken care of if something happens to them and the best thing to do in those cases would be to decide not only what your children might get but also what happens to the pets if you die, not only if you die, but when you die, because you are going to die sometime and so certainly it is reality that we all will meet that end. Sharon has been very elaborate in the way she has planned for her animals and so, everybody will have a different attitude about how much detail they want to go into but one of the very simple things to do would be--you never really know how many pets you'll have or what their ages are and how many will pre-decease you so you can do a "catch all" paragraph in your Will where you would say any pet I might own at the time of my death and then make a plan set forth in that Will of what happens to them. It is a very good idea to be sure that they will go to a home where there is plenty of care and love and a safe place to be. It would be good also not only to say where they go or who gets them to manage them and take care of them after their master is deceased but also to do a little financial addition to the Will that would help whoever is kind enough to take them so it would not be a terrible burden financially on that person to make it a lot easier for transition to take place in the home of a new parent of that animal. So anything that anybody wants to do about that would be just a matter of planning because the lawyer can write it up however that pet owner wants it to be. It really is quiet simple to do. The biggest problem would be to be sure the pets are going to a good home.

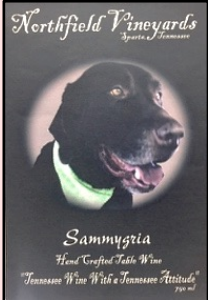
There is also a document in law called a Holographic Will, which is less formal and does not require a lawyer or witnesses; however this document **must** be handwritten entirely by the person who is giving direction after death, signed by him or her and dated. The Holographic Will is handwritten, signed and dated by the individual is lawful and enforceable as such and no witnesses are required. It should be noted that no other person is allowed to write upon any part of the Holographic Will and to do so may invalidate the Holographic Will. After death, the document is proven by two or more people who know the handwriting of the deceased and the Court will declare the document to be the lawful last will and testament of the deceased and as enforceable as a will prepared by a lawyer.

Sharon Langford:

We've had some situations here in White County where people have died leaving pets homeless. A woman passed away and she had dogs, cats and some birds. We were able to place the birds with a rescue; the dogs went to the White County Animal Shelter; and Carolyn managed rehoming of the cats. That's not a situation we want our animals to experience. If it had not been for these caring people, I don't know what would have happened to these pets. I personally have adopted what I call road dogs, strays, two in particular that were near where I live. The dogs were in good shape; neutered; well

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It's All About the Animals!

"A pet is never truly forgotten until it is no longer remembered."
~Lacie Petitto

Wags and Purrs

Friends of White County Animals

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White Co. Humane Society

931-935-8377

White County Animal Shelter

931-761-3647

How You Can Help

- Purchase customized license plates that benefit animals
- Advocate for animals by writing to newspapers and legislative representatives
- Welfare legislation support for animals
- Social Media networking animals needing rescue or help
- Spay & Neuter your pets
- Adopt from shelters or rescues
- Volunteer with organizations that help animals
- Educate kids to care for animals gently and responsibly
- Donate financially to organizations that help animals

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Sparta, TN 38583

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socialized; etc. I thought surely they belonged to somebody because they were in such good condition for dogs to be found on the highway. I had flyers made and posted them in the area they were found; ran classified ads; networked; and did everything I could do to try and find the owner. A few weeks later the people in the neighborhood who had ask me to help the dogs got back to me and told me that they were pretty sure they belonged to somebody who died and the relatives had just basically turned them out.

John Knowles:

But, if you think about it – you want to be sure that your children are taken care of and so many of these pets become members of the family and your don't want to have the situation where there's not some plan that the child or pet will go to a good home and I think in all of us, everybody knows pet lovers and the idea would be to get somebody like that or somebody in the family – your family – that would agree to take your pet if something happens to you. So, the caring part of it – you know most of these pets have probably been pampered anyway and so it would be kind of tragic if they were put in the environment where they didn't get quiet a bit of attention, so those are the kinds of things you really need to think about.

Sharon Langford:

I've recently seen in Nashville shelters and rescue groups animals who I was told had come from a situation where someone had either gone into a nursing home or had died and the animals were traumatized and it was going to take a while to get them socialized and comfortable enough where they would be very appealing for anyone to adopt. So there is a way to avoid that from happening and that's why we wanted to talk to you so you could advise people.

John Knowles:

I can not imagine people would want a pet to not have a home, especially if it had been in a good home and so it takes quiet a bit of planning, I guess in some situations it is easy because they know people who are pet lovers and they would be happy to give the pets a loving home. Another option is if you have a friend or friends and have a compact made among those friends and to say, if you go first, I'll take Rover, you know, or somebody else would say, well, I would like to be in on that. And so it might be good to have several people involved just in case that there was more than one or say two or three dogs that needed homes. Maybe three would overwhelm one household, especially if they had other animals. Get a group of people who you all know and work with to just kind of form a ladies or gentlemen agreement that they would be there to back up whatever was needed in the care of the animal of a deceased person.

I think, a great point that anybody at any age who has pets, has a responsibility to plan for them. And you know what, I guess most people think that, well, I've got a dog and I will be alive when that dog is gone. The dog could have 15, 16, 17 years, and you know that is a pretty good age on a dog, but we don't know. And then so, the very idea of any age animal will need a home and to be denied that would be a travesty of justice for the animals. I just think it is so important that a Will be done and that the person or person you select to receive the pets after your death are persons who love animals and can be trusted to honor your request and your memory.

Your subscription to our Newsletter is appreciated and communicates to us that you care about animals and want to help.

Thank you for Loving the Animals!

Editor: Carolyn Turner

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<http://www.friendsofwhitecountyanimals.com>