

News



Cyndi with LeBron (left and right) and Tater (center). Photos courtesy of Cyndi Eaton.

What will happen to your pet if you die?

By [Kristin Yarbrough](#)

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When her lifelong friend passed away, the decision to take in his two small dogs came easily for Cyndi Eaton. “I knew he would want them to be well taken care of,” Cyndi explained, “and I also loved them.”

Cyndi and her husband Jeff welcomed LeBron and Tater to the Pine Mountain home they share with chickens, bunnies, three other dogs, and occasional guest dogs which they foster for local rescue groups.

Only later did Cyndi learn that Gary had included his dogs in his will. The Wetumpka resident and chef, who died last June at 62 years old, had set up a trust fund for LeBron and Tater. “I had no idea until after I said I would take them,” Cyndi said.

Though most people make arrangements for their children, homes, and belongings in the event of their death, few plan for their pets. As was the case at Gary’s death, family members are not necessarily able or willing to take in animals.

If a car accident leaves you in unconscious, will a neighbor know to check on your cat? What if you move to an assisted living facility that does not allow pets? If you are incarcerated, incapacitated, or if you pass away, what will happen to the animals you love?

Though it may seem morbid to make arrangements for your pets in the event that you are unable to care for them, doing so is the best assurance that your loved ones will be in good hands. Unfortunately, dogs and cats who are brought to a shelter don't always find a new home. And horses, goats, chickens, reptiles, and other animals both large and small may not even have that option.

"Always have a plan for your pets, no matter their age," Jessie White urged from firsthand experience. Jessie and her husband Derrick took in Agatha, a 17-year-old cat who had belonged to the grandmother of an acquaintance.

The woman's granddaughter had tried to care for the cat, but was allergic. Agatha then moved in with Jessie's brother who "has never said no to anyone in need," Jessie explained.

Jessie met Agatha when her brother "pulled back a curtain to reveal a frail, beautiful, big-eyed Calico sitting in a little box, staring out the window," Jessie recalled. "The moment she saw me, she let out the biggest meow and immediately let me love all over her."

Sensing that her brother was overwhelmed with a third cat and a demanding job, Jessie followed her heart. "Without hesitation, I texted my husband: *We're getting another cat.*"

Agatha shared the last year of her life with Jessie, Derrick, their other cat Stella, and their dog Chevy. "She spent hours in my office while I worked, got zoomies like a kitten, and played until her little body just gave out," Jessie said. Aggie was nearly 18 years old.

"I've had a will for years, and after Aggie, I updated it to ensure Stella will be cared for if something happens to me," Jessie explained from her cabin on Pine Mountain. "There's an allotted amount of money in my will specifically designated for her care."

Key to a comprehensive plan is a caretaker who has agreed to care for your pets for the rest of their lives. The plan should include information about veterinary records, microchip, diet, behavior, and any physical issues. Your planning makes a possible transition as smooth as possible, and paves the way for your animals to live out their lives with happiness and love.

"It may seem morbid," Jessie said, "but pets are family, and they deserve the same consideration."

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To read Jessie's experience in her own words, see [Aggie's Story: A Year of Love & Lessons on Planning for Pets.](#)

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