

## WE ALL NEED TO PREPARE

We want to thank Marci Cook, DVM, and MBTCA AKC Delegate, for sharing this information from the AKC Delegates Google group. It's valuable information that we should all consider.

This information comes from Matthew Townsend, Proud AKC Breeder of Merit, Sforzando Leonbergers; Delegate, Carolina Working Group Association; Member, Delegate Dog Show Rules Committee; President, Mid-Atlantic Leonberger Club of VA and Tarheel Leonberger Club. Edited for punctuation and clarity.

This past week, I lost a good friend in Leonbergers who died suddenly without immediate family to care for her dogs. Getting her pets out of the shelter was both urgent and difficult. Many years ago, I faced something similar when a puppy buyer of mine died unexpectedly of a coronary. There was no documentation in place. I was able to persuade the shelter to release the Leonberger to me and, thankfully, his family later approved from across the country — but not before a deputy became quite cross with me.

These experiences remind me of something we often discuss in principle, but too rarely prepare for in practice:

- **We do talk** about including our dogs in estate planning. Margaret DiCorleto shared some wonderful resources in that regard.
- **We rarely talk** about what happens when we are alive but suddenly disabled, or when death comes without family close at hand.

The reality is that we are much more likely to be temporarily or permanently disabled than to die quickly — and in either case, our dogs could be left in a tough spot if we haven't made simple plans. With that in mind, I want to share two straightforward, practical tools I've drafted:

- **Limited Power of Attorney for Pet Care** – allows a trusted person to step in if you are alive but unable to act (illness, accident, hospitalization, etc.), including explicit authority to retrieve your dogs from home or shelter and authorize veterinary care.
- **Pet Care Authorization** – allows a trusted person to immediately remove and care for your dogs in the event of your death or unavailability (not legally bulletproof, but very likely to work).

Both are short, plain-language documents, notarization-ready, and designed to be recognized and honored by veterinarians, shelters, or officials. They are not meant to replace estate planning — but to cover the vulnerable “gap” moments when pets are most at risk and can be stressed or lost.

I encourage you to download, review, and adapt these documents for your own situation, and to share them with others in your clubs. None of us likes to think about being incapacitated or gone, but leaving our dogs without a plan leaves too much to chance.

Attached:

- **Limited Power of Attorney for Pet Care**
- **Pet Care Authorization**

## Limited Power of Attorney for Pet Care

I, [Full Legal Name], living at [Full Address], am the legal owner of the pet(s) listed below:

Name: [Pet's Name] Species/Breed: [Dog, Cat, etc.] Description: [Sex, color, markings] Microchip #: [Insert if applicable] (Repeat as needed for each pet.)

### Appointment of Agent

I appoint [Trusted Person's Full Legal Name], who lives at [Agent's Address], as my Agent (Attorney-in-Fact).

### Grant of Authority

If I am alive but unable to act for myself due to illness, injury, or other incapacity, and reasonable efforts to contact me have failed, my Agent has authority to:

Take custody of my pet(s) from my home, or from any shelter, boarding facility, or veterinary hospital. My Agent is authorized to enter my home, using keys or other lawful means I have provided, for the limited purpose of caring for or removing my pet(s). This authority does not extend to any other use of my property. 2. Authorize routine and emergency veterinary treatment, including euthanasia if a licensed veterinarian recommends it due to terminal illness or severe suffering. 3. Arrange boarding, fostering, or re-homing if needed. 4. Use any funds I have provided or designated for pet care (cash, accounts, or payment methods) to pay for necessary expenses. 5. Do anything reasonably necessary to provide for my pet(s)' health, safety, and welfare.

This power applies only to matters related to the care of my pet(s). My Agent has no authority over any other part of my personal, medical, or financial life.

### Effective Date and Duration

This Limited Power of Attorney becomes effective when I cannot act for myself and cannot be reached despite reasonable effort to contact me, and remains in effect until I regain the ability to act on my own, or I revoke it in writing (by delivering written notice to my Agent and any third party relying on this document).

### Reliance on This Document

All shelters, veterinarians, boarding facilities, and other third parties may rely on this document as proof of my Agent's authority.

Signed this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Signature] [Printed Name]

### Notary Section

State of \_\_\_\_\_ County of \_\_\_\_\_

Subscribed and sworn before me on this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public Signature

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pet Care Authorization**

I, [Full Legal Name], residing at [Full Address], am the owner of the following pet(s):

Name: [Pet's Name] Species/Breed: [Dog, Cat, etc.] Sex/Description: [Male/Female, color, markings]  
Microchip #: [Insert if applicable] (Repeat lines above for each pet, if more than one.)

In the event of my incapacity, disappearance, death, or if I am otherwise unavailable or out of communication, I authorize [Trusted Caretaker's Full Legal Name], residing at [Caretaker's Address], to immediately take custody of my pets listed above, and any other pets I may own at the time of my incapacity, disappearance, death, or unavailability. This authorization includes: - Removing my pet(s) from any boarding facility, shelter, veterinary hospital, or similar location. - Making all necessary care and placement decisions. - Providing a permanent home, or if unable, arranging a suitable home with trusted adopters. I ask that any shelter, veterinarian, or caretaker honor this designation without delay. This provision is also contained in my Last Will and Testament so that my designated caretaker has authority both immediately and through formal estate proceedings.

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[Your Signature]

[Printed Name]

**Notary Section**

State of \_\_\_\_\_ County of \_\_\_\_\_

Subscribed and sworn before me on this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public Signature

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_