

# THE FAMILY ROOM

## Paws for Thought – Exploring the Deep Connections Between Pets and Family

### The name Atticus holds special significance for Matt Ludt,

encompassing a beloved pet, a literary hero, and the values that shape his law firm. The story of Atticus is woven into the very fabric of Matt's personal and professional life, reflecting a commitment to justice, empathy, and understanding. Atticus, the yellow Labrador, joined Matt and his wife in 2005, shortly after they were married. This loyal and loving dog became a cherished

member of their family, accompanying them through various moves, from Minneapolis to Saint Paul, and finally to Polk County, Wisconsin. Atticus brought joy and companionship to their lives until he passed away in 2015. His memory continues to hold a special place in their hearts. The name Atticus was not chosen by chance.

It was inspired by one of

Matt's favorite literary characters, Atticus Finch, from Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird." This iconic figure influenced Matt's decision to pursue a career in law. Atticus Finch, with his integrity, courage, and dedication to justice, served as a powerful role model. The character's simplicity, humanity, and commitment to fighting discrimination resonated deeply with Matt.

In 2012, Matt decided to channel his admiration for Atticus Finch into his professional life. Recognizing that family law cases were the most gratifying for him, he founded Atticus Family Law. The firm was named not only in memory of his beloved dog but also in honor of the principles embodied by Atticus Finch. Matt wanted his law firm to reflect the

same values of empathy, fairness, and understanding that Finch represented.

The connection between the three Atticus identities—his dog, the literary hero, and his law firm—underscores a unified theme in Matt's life. A particular quote from "To Kill a Mockingbird" has always stayed with Matt: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it," says Atticus Finch. This principle is central to how Matt and his team at Atticus Family Law approach their work, striving to understand and support their clients through some of the most challenging times in their lives.

In essence, the name

Atticus symbolizes a blend of personal affection, literary inspiration, and professional dedication. It represents a commitment to justice, empathy, and the understanding that each individual's perspective is vital. Through Atticus Family Law, Matt Ludt continues to honor the legacy of his dog and the enduring influence of Atticus Finch, helping families navigate their legal journeys with compassion and integrity. ULY

### DID YOU KNOW?



Dogs have a remarkable sense of smell, with some breeds capable of detecting scents from miles away.





## Pets During Divorce: A Delightful Distraction or Discouraging Difficulty?

By Tara Eisenhard

My family got a new puppy about six months before my parents separated. Having a young dog in the house might have added just enough frustration to contribute to the dissolution of my mom and dad's marriage. However, after my dad moved out, our frustrations over the puppy troubles transformed into gratitude for a distraction from the divorce.

In the decades since, I've known many families who navigated a divorce with pets or even brought a new pet into the family to fill a void. Pets bring plenty of smiles, but they're also a big responsibility. Let's examine the pros and cons of pet ownership during this challenging time.

### Pet Pros

#### A fun distraction.

Pets are sweet, innocent, and some are quite cute and cuddly. When your world is upside-down, and the specifics of your future are uncertain, pets can inspire smiles and laughter. They're always glad to see you, and they remind you that there's more to life than your divorce.

#### A source of support.

Need to bend an ear, but nobody on your support squad is available? A pet can provide a calming presence and be a great listener.

#### A morning motivator.

Pets can be very forgiving until it's time to eat, so you'll have an extra incentive to get out of bed and start checking off

your daily tasks. Dogs especially crave a routine, and this benefits humans too. Following a schedule can bring a sense of control during an otherwise chaotic time.

#### A family uniter.

As parents and children struggle to find a new normal, frustrations can be amplified and connection can be difficult. Instead of looking at each other in anger, parents, and children can look at a pet in fondness.

#### Shared duties and triumphs.

When family members work together to care for a pet, they ensure the pet's health, happiness, and stability. As people work together in service of their pet, they're also working together for the family and helping each other learn and grow through life.

### Pet Cons

#### A financial strain.

Dividing a family's finances to support two households means less money in each home. In this light, a pet can easily feel like a burden.

#### Early mornings.

Divorce can be a draining process, and sometimes it's necessary to rest and recharge. Unfortunately, hungry pets don't understand this and can be quite demanding.

#### Limited resources for care.

In dual-adult households, responsibilities can easily shift, ensuring pet care remains consistent. However, post-divorce, finding alternative resources like pet sitters or dog walking services becomes necessary, adding financial strain.

#### Housing rules, regulations and resources.

Sometimes divorce prompts a sale of the marital home and sends both people to rental units, even if only for a short time. The process of searching for a suitable post-divorce home can become complicated (and more expensive) when there are pets to consider.

If you're navigating divorce with a pet or considering adding a pet to your family, there are issues to examine as well as memories to make. It's important to assess your situation to determine if the benefits outweigh the drawbacks.

## Pets of AFL!



### Houston and Tony

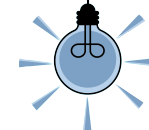
Meet Tony and Houston, the dynamic duo of the household! Tony, the Yorkie, displays remarkable patience and kindness, always letting his friend Houston, the Shih Tzu, take the lead at treat time. Their heartwarming bond is a testament to their friendship and loyalty as beloved pets to our Firm Director, Natasha.



Curious which dog breed best complements your lifestyle and personality?

Scan the above QR code to find your ideal match! This quiz at [lams.com](http://lams.com) offers valuable insights for those considering adding a furry friend to their family.

### DID YOU KNOW?



Guinea pigs have a vocabulary of over 30 different sounds to communicate with their owners.

## Navigating Pet Custody in Minnesota: What You Need to Know About Pets and Divorce

By Stephanie Wolf, Esq.

Divorce is a challenging time for any family, including those with beloved pets. In Minnesota, where pets are often considered part of the family, the issue of pet custody can be emotionally charged and legally complex. Understanding the laws and options available can help divorcing couples make informed decisions that prioritize the well-being of their furry companions.

### Minnesota Pet Custody Laws

Unlike child custody, where courts prioritize the best interests of the child, pets are generally treated as property under Minnesota law. This means that in the absence of a prenuptial agreement or a specific provision in the divorce decree addressing pet custody, pets are treated like any other asset and subject to division based on equitable distribution principles.

### DID YOU KNOW?



Fish are excellent stress-relievers; watching them swim can lower blood pressure and reduce anxiety.

### Factors Considered in Pet Custody

While pets are considered property, courts may still consider several factors when determining pet custody.

- **Primary Caregiver:** The court may consider which spouse primarily cared for the pet, including feeding, grooming, exercising, and providing medical care.
- **Emotional Bond:** The strength of the emotional bond between each spouse and the pet may also be considered, although proving emotional attachment can be challenging.
- **Financial Responsibility:** Courts may look at who financially supported the pet, including expenses related to food, veterinary care, and other necessities.

- **Living Arrangements:** The living situation of each spouse post-divorce may influence pet custody decisions, especially if one spouse is relocating to a pet-friendly environment.

### Options for Resolving Pet Custody

- **Negotiation and Mediation:** Many couples

find it beneficial to negotiate pet custody arrangements outside of court through mediation. This allows both parties to work together to create a plan that meets the needs of the pet and each spouse.

- **Pet Custody Agreements:** Similar to a parenting plan for children, a pet custody agreement outlines each spouse's rights and responsibilities regarding the pet, including visitation schedules, financial support, and decision-making authority.

**Court Intervention:** If spouses cannot reach an agreement on pet custody, the court may intervene and make a determination based on the factors mentioned earlier. However, leaving the decision to the court can be unpredictable and may not fully consider the pet's best interests.

### Protecting Your Pet's Interests

Regardless of the method chosen to resolve pet custody, the well-being of the pet should always be the top priority. Consider the following tips to protect your pet during a divorce:



- **Maintain Stability:** Keep your pet's routine as consistent as possible to minimize stress.
- **Consider Co-Ownership:** Shared custody arrangements can be beneficial if both spouses are committed to providing a stable environment for the pet.

- **Update Records:** Ensure that your pet's microchip, registration, and veterinary records reflect the correct ownership information post-divorce.

- **Seek Legal Advice:** Consult with a family law attorney experienced in pet custody matters to understand your rights and options under Minnesota law. Divorce can be challenging, especially when pets are involved.

By understanding Minnesota's pet custody laws, considering relevant factors, and exploring options for resolution, divorcing couples can make decisions that

prioritize the well-being of their beloved pets. Ultimately, open communication, cooperation, and a focus on what's best for the pet can help navigate this emotional aspect of divorce more smoothly.

## Pets of AFL!



**Pearl**

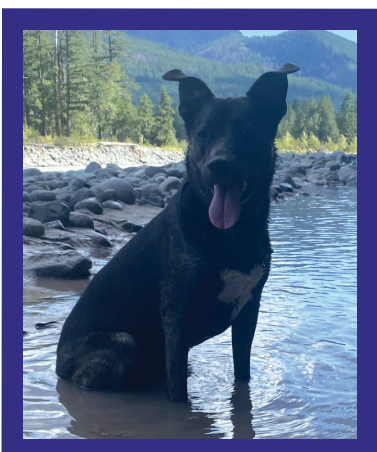
Meet Pearl, the reigning queen of purrfection! With her signature double collar bells, she announces her loaf-making prowess from afar. Pearl is the adorable cat belonging to our AFL Attorney, Stephanie.

## Pets of AFL!



**Brooks**

Brooks, the spirited dog, only relaxes in the car when it's zooming at 40 mph or more. Brooks is the dashing puppers owned by the AFL Founder, Matt.



**Koda**

AFL paralegal Carina's dog, Koda, found a new playmate in Jackson, the chocolate lab from the next street over. Jackson loves sneaking over to romp and brighten Koda's days, bringing joy to the neighborhood and forming an inseparable, playful bond.



**Willow**

Willow is AFL Marketing Coordinator Laura's pride and joy! This sassy girl steals hearts with her playful "slappies" and irresistible charm. Before diving into breakfast, Willow insists on her morning cuddles, adding an extra sprinkle of sweetness to her already adorable antics.



**Tito**

Meet Tito! This adorable 8-year-old Holland Lop bunny hails all the way from Milwaukee, WI. He's a salad connoisseur, with carrots and bananas being his absolute favorites. Tito is the cherished companion of AFL attorney Courtney Cain, spreading joy wherever he hops!



**Little Tara**

Little Tara is the epitome of cuteness! Owned by our Client Coach Tara (no relation, just a happy coincidence), Little Tara charms everyone with her sweet demeanor. She's a social butterfly, making friends everywhere she goes!



**Dexter and Drake**

Introducing Jessica Dooley's adorable duo, Dexter and Drake! Dexter, the bundle of energy, enjoys water, wrestling, and the occasional bed demolition. Drake, the ultimate cuddlebug, basks in the sun and takes his role as mom's protector very seriously. Together, they're the heart of the family, lending a paw during dad's hunting trips and bringing endless joy to the kids.

## Pawsome Puzzle

G P X R M L E N N E K D E F Q N T V R B  
 A G J X P X H C F H R H T R R S G H L C  
 R C T E E F B Q T Z W W R Q K D O R Y R  
 C M I B R H T N I R P W A P I K C W A T  
 L K N E C Q F W K T N H C L B K G F X M  
 A E X K H N F N V P E U G T B V R Y J U  
 U F G G P A I S M Q C N B R L I O I W W  
 D G X J K I S S F J I O J C E N O F F H  
 M V T K Y R N L B P I M I S T V M S O L  
 C E G L A A N B P T G T C S Y R I N A H  
 N N N T C N X O F S O I A P T T N N J P  
 K P I Y D I H G P X T N G R O B G G A O  
 A M E F I R W P E A K U R B Q A M E O W  
 E K R H J E E D U C Z U E K O D T P B V  
 U C I E J T E Q X Y P D U A I Z R K Y L  
 Q F H O T E A X U H I U R C R E X G A G  
 S O S O L V N H K E P O U N C E P D L L  
 V N A L F W O T N M K O Y J P B V M C H  
 U P E F D Z O C D F M Y F E Y P N D D B  
 E X L K H J E H T W H I S K E R K F E S

1. Veterinarian
2. Obedience
3. Kennel
4. Kibble
5. Pawprint
6. Whisker
7. Aquatics
8. Meow
9. Howl
10. Hopping
11. Purr
12. Exotic
13. Grooming
14. Leash
15. Pounce
16. Perch
17. Squeak

### DID YOU KNOW?



Cats have a unique vocalization known as "chirping," often used when they spot birds or other prey outside