

How To Find A Lost Cat Or Dog

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First, search your property thoroughly. Cats and small dogs can get into some mighty strange places.

- We once had a cat that got stuck in an 8" ventilation pipe for 2 days right next to the house! We searched frantically, night and day, for him all during this time. Finally we heard his pitiful, faint cries coming from the pipe and saved him! (We immediately installed a screen over the outlet so that this would never happen again.)
- The point is, look in EVERY nook and cranny. Don't assume that your pet would never crawl into some tiny space.
- Look behind, under, and inside washing machines, clothes dryers, stoves, refrigerators, and dish washers. Look behind water heaters, in boxes, under furniture, under beds, in closets, in cabinets, in shelves and bookcases, in drainpipes, in sewer drains, in culvert pipes, under vehicles, in crawl spaces under the house, inside sheds and barns, etc. In the case of cats, also look in attic crawl spaces, on the roof, in roof gutters, and up in the trees.

Walk the neighborhood, talk to everybody, and leave your phone number.

- Go to each house in the area where your pet was lost and talk to the residents. Write down a description of your lost pet and your phone number and leave it with them. Leave it attached to their door if they are not home.
- Talk to everybody you run across. This includes the postman, paperboy, children, parents waiting at the school bus stop, school crossing guards, neighborhood crime watch groups, garbage pick-up crews, etc. Give them a written description of your pet and your phone number as well. Try to get all the neighborhood children involved. Kids are great at finding lost pets!
- Ask everybody if they saw or heard anything unusual in the neighborhood and carefully write down everything they tell you. This could include strange vehicles, work crews, people, or activities. Get detailed descriptions of everything.
- Don't travel alone. Take a friend or family member with you.
- Don't write down your name or address. Because of scam artists and other criminals in our society, it is never a good idea to publicize this information.
- Offer a reward, but don't state the amount.

Make some noise while you walk around the neighborhood! Animals can hear you from great distances.

- Have all your family members call the pet's name.
- If your pet has a favorite "squeaky toy" bring it along and use it to help you make familiar noises.
- Use an "Acme Dog Whistle" to get your pet's attention. The high-pitched sound from these whistles can carry up to a mile or more. Cats are attracted to this sound as well as dogs. (Note: this whistle is the "silent" ultrasonic type, but has a simple adjustment that lowers the tone into the human audible range. Use this audible tone when searching for your pet because the sound will carry farther)
- Carry a box of your pet's favorite biscuits, chews, or other treats and rattle it loudly while calling your pet's name.
- Make any other noise that your pet is familiar with.
- It's also important to stop regularly, be quiet, and listen for your pet to make a noise in reply.
- The neighbors will think you're crazy, but hey, this is your pet's life we're talking about here!

Bring a powerful flashlight (even during daylight hours) for checking in dark spaces.

- A frightened or injured cat will hide in dark spaces and will not come to you. An injured dog will also hide in dark places.
- Use your flashlight for checking under houses and other dark spots. Also check storage sheds, garages, dumpsters, trash cans, and under cars. Don't forget to look in trees for a cat.

Place strong-scented articles outside your home to attract your pet. Animals find their way by scent as well as sound.

- Place some of your dirty clothes outdoors. Sweaty gym socks and jogging suits are great for this!
- Place a cat's litterbox, bedding, and favorite toys outside.
- Place a dog's bedding and favorite toys outside.
- Put out some smelly food such as tuna, sardines, or warm, freshly cooked chicken, liver, or other savory meat. Be sure to protect the food if you can, so that other animals don't eat it!
- If it's warm weather, crate other family pets and place them outside in a SECURE area.

Call local veterinarian offices during the day. After 5 PM, call veterinarian emergency clinics.

- Find out if your pet was injured and taken to any of these offices or clinics for treatment.
- If an office has taken in or treated any animal that even remotely resembles your pet, VISIT THE OFFICE IN PERSON. Your description of your pet and their description of the same pet rarely match. YOU MUST GO SEE FOR YOURSELF!
- Also ask them for the phone numbers of local rescue organizations. They generally keep a list and may even work with them.
- Call each of the rescue organizations and ask for their help and find out if they have your pet. These groups generally network with each other and will pass the word about your case.

VISIT your local Animal Control, humane societies, and animal shelters, including the ones in surrounding areas.

- You must actually visit the animal control and humane shelters every day or two. It works well if several family members can take turns visiting the shelters.
- Your description of your pet and their description rarely match. YOU MUST GO LOOK! Be sure to check all areas of the shelter, including the infirmary. Also be aware that dogs may be housed in the cat section and vice-versa.
- Leave a picture of your pet and your phone number at each shelter. Befriend them.
- Find out the holding period of each animal control and humane shelter. Be aware of how much time you have to claim your pet before it is euthanized!
- Government Animal Control agencies usually keep an animal for only 3 days and then they either adopt it out or kill it. You only get one chance at this. Be there!

Ask Animal Control, humane societies, and shelters about pet rescue organizations in your area.

- Usually there are smaller pet rescue groups that work with the local humane shelter. They often take pets from the shelter to save them from euthanasia and adopt them out to new homes.
- Call the rescue groups regularly to see if they have your pet.

Find out if your pet has been killed on the road.

- This is a very sad but necessary task. Otherwise, you may never know what happened to your pet and it could haunt you for years.
- The road crews for your local and state department of transportation (DOT) usually pick up dead animals from the roadside and city streets. In some cases Animal Control does this as well. You have to call around and find out which agencies do this service in your area. Be sure to find them all!
- Dogs are usually picked up within 24 hours, but cats often are not.
- Call the city, county, and state road crews, DOT, and Animal Control EVERY DAY to see if they have found your pet's body.
- Make arrangements to visit their offices so you can speak with them face to face. Befriend them and leave a photo of your pet so the road crews can be on the lookout for it.
- If any of them do not cooperate with your efforts, contact City Hall as a last resort and complain. This usually gets a response. But remember, you will get better results with courteous personal visits.
- If your pet is wearing an ID tag, the DOT and/or Animal Control agencies should contact you if they find your pet dead along the road. But don't count on it. You must put forth the effort to find out for yourself!
- Sadly, this section has a higher "find" rate than anything else except posted flyers.

It is extremely important to post MANY flyers about your lost pet within a 1-mile radius of where it was lost.

- Overall, flyers or posters produce more "finds" than anything else. But don't neglect the rest of the tips!
- Your budget will determine how many flyers you can afford to post, but the more the better.
- **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME OR ADDRESS ON YOUR FLYER!**
- If possible, it is best to place a color photo of your pet on each flyer.
- Use 8-1/2" X 11" fluorescent paper for high visibility.
- List the date and place your pet was lost, breed of dog or cat, sex, age, weight, color, markings, and your telephone number. Offer a reward, but don't state the amount.
- It is very important to always withhold several identifying marks and characteristics of your lost pet. You may need to use these later to verify that a person has actually found your pet and is not trying to scam you. More on this later.
- Post the flyers at waist level on telephone poles and at eye level in such places as veterinary offices, pet shops, barber & beauty shops, grocery stores, community bulletin boards, churches, pizza parlors, laundromats, convenience stores, near schools, and on school bulletin boards.
- Examine your posted flyers frequently and replace the ones that are missing or damaged.

Place an Ad in your local newspaper. Some will do this for free.

- Be sure to advertise in the Sunday edition as well as during the week.
- Also place an ad in any "Penny Saver" type of publications you might have in your area.

Check the newspaper "found" ads every day.

- Most newspapers provide free ads to people who have found lost pets.
- Also check regularly in any other local publications.

Don't ever give up! Pets have been known to find their way back home after being lost for several months. Good luck!

A Few Words Of Caution

- There are dangerous people in our society who prey upon victims by using "found" pets as a ploy.
- **NEVER** respond to a "found" pet contact alone. Take a friend or two along with you.
- Arrange to meet in a public place.
- **NEVER** invite the person to your home unless you happen to know them well.

Beware of money scams. A common one is a person calls you claiming to be a long-haul trucker. He says he picked up your pet and is out of state now. He heard about your ad, flyer, etc. and says he will return your pet if you will pay to ship it home. This person does not have your pet; he is only trying to take your money.

Don't wander around looking for your pet alone, either during the day or at night. Always bring a friend or relative. This is especially important in unfamiliar neighborhoods.

Use the identifying information you have withheld about your pet. Please remember that you should never give out all of the identifying features of your lost pet. If the person who claims to have found your pet cannot describe these features to you, they do not have your pet!

When You Find Your Pet

- Go around and collect up all of your old flyers.
- Thank everybody who has helped you.
- Let us know! We are always glad to hear about lost and found "success" stories.

How To Protect Your Pets Now

- **Safeguard your pets before they are lost** by following the common-sense tips below.

- **Pet-proof your yard fence** so your cat or dog will be safely confined. Be sure to check your fence regularly for new escape routes.
- **Keep fence gates securely locked.** This is for the safety of both your pet and any visitors (wanted or unwanted).
- **Never allow your pets to roam free** in the neighborhood. Leash them at all times.
- **Always transport a cat in a carrier.** Never take your cat to the Vet or anywhere else unless it is secured. A carried cat can bolt and hide if frightened by loud noises. When a cat is frightened in strange surroundings, especially with traffic noise around, it will hide and will not come to you.
- **The same goes for dogs.** Always leash them when taking them anywhere. If a dog gets loose in an unfamiliar area its chances of ever finding its way home are practically nil.

Get some good photos of your pet now, before it's too late.

- **Take close-up shots so that details show up well.** Keep taking shots until you get a few good ones that really look like your pet. Most snapshots of pets look like any other cat or dog. You want your photos to be unique and your pet to be unmistakable.
- **These photos will be invaluable to you later** if your pet is ever lost.
- **Train your pet (cat or dog) to associate an "Acme Dog Whistle" with pleasant things.** Blow the whistle each time just before you feed them. They will then be more likely to come running to you when you use the whistle to find them when they are lost.

Ensure that YOU can be located if your pet is found.

- Always keep a collar on your pet with a tag that has your **CURRENT PHONE NUMBER** on it.
- Always have a **CURRENT** rabies tag and pet license tag attached to your pet's collar. You can be found by the number on the tags.
- **The collar and phone tag are the most important form of ID you can have for your pet.** However, pets can lose collars while on the streets. For real security, a backup is needed. (See next two items.)
- **Talk to your vet about a microchip implant.** A chip provides positive and reliable identification for your pet and all modern shelters scan animals for this ID device. Find out which brand of chip is prevalent in your area and go with that one. If you have a choice, we like the HomeAgain™ microchips.

The HomeAgain™ microchip is distributed by Schering-Plough Animal Health. The American Kennel Club maintains a nationwide database of these microchip numbers. The chip is constructed in a way that tends to prevent migration from the injection site. Call (800)234-6373 to find a Vet near you who offers this product.

- **Also ask your vet about pet tattoos.** We don't like tattoos as well as we do microchips, but they also provide positive identification if done correctly. A tattoo is often very difficult to read because hair has grown over it and/or the lost animal is frightened and will not allow inspection. If you do use a tattoo, we feel that the best place to apply it is on the inner thigh. Pet thieves have been known to cut off a tattooed ear!

More about rabies tags.

- It is absolutely vital that your pet have a **CURRENT** rabies tag on it at all times!
- If a county happens to be under a "Rabies Alert" or a "Rabies Quarantine" and your pet is picked up without a current rabies tag, they **WILL** kill your loved one! This is a public health issue, so you will have no recourse.
- We are very familiar with this situation, as it occurs often in our area. Please don't let this happen to your pet!

And finally, spay or neuter your pets!

- Both males and females will be much less likely to wander if they are "fixed."
- An added benefit is that they will live a longer, happier, healthier life if they are spayed or neutered.