

Tips for Recovering a LOST PET

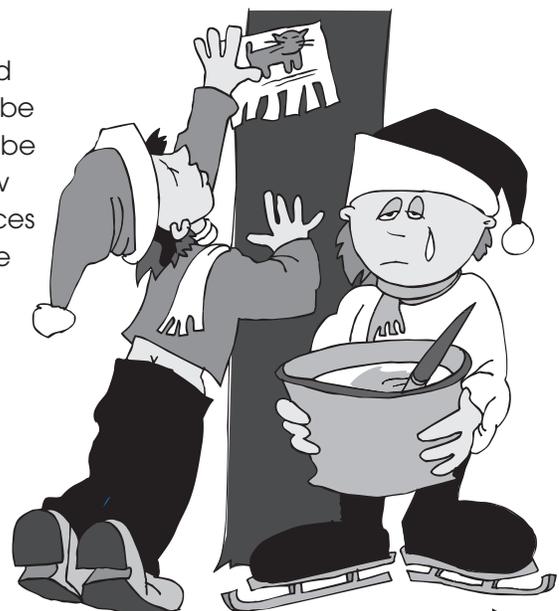
Nobody wants to contemplate losing a pet, but 6 to 8 million dogs and cats find their way into animal shelters every year. Some of them escape from their own home or yard because a gate has been left open, they become frightened and bolt, or they dig their way under the backyard fence. Others become lost when they escape from a car, wander away from a cabin or become panicked in the parking lot of the veterinary clinic. Only 15-30% of runaway dogs find their way back to their owners, while less than 2% of cats do. Many of the pets who don't get reclaimed have owners who are looking in the wrong place or who have given up searching for them.

If your pet disappears, stay calm, form a plan of action, and recruit as many people as you can to help with the search. The more eyes and ears that are peeled for a sign of your pet, the more likely it is he or she will be found. Gather a team to comb the neighborhood, asking anyone you see along the way if they've noticed a dog on the run.

Flyers that you post should be bright fluorescent, say LOST PET on the bottom and REWARD in very large letters at the top. A picture and brief description should be on the poster. Make sure you take these flyers to area veterinarians, nearby dog parks, supermarkets and any local businesses that will let you post something in their window.

Call all animal control agencies, shelters and rescue groups within a 60 mile radius, especially for dogs. Cats are likely to remain within a 5-7 house radius of your home, however. For cats, it's more important to check any places a cat could become trapped or hole up. One of my cats became trapped in a neighbor's garage and another one got stuck in a neighbor's shed. A disoriented cat in a strange place is usually looking to hide.

You may need to resort to a baited trap or setting out food. Plumbers' cameras that can be snaked into crawl spaces and other tight places can be useful. If your cat tends to have a recognizable meow you can try placing baby monitors in likely hiding places in the hopes that you might hear the pet crying. Some humane societies and shelters have humane traps with voice-activated baby monitors to alert the owner when an animal is caught, high-powered flashlights for looking under buildings and motion-activated cameras.

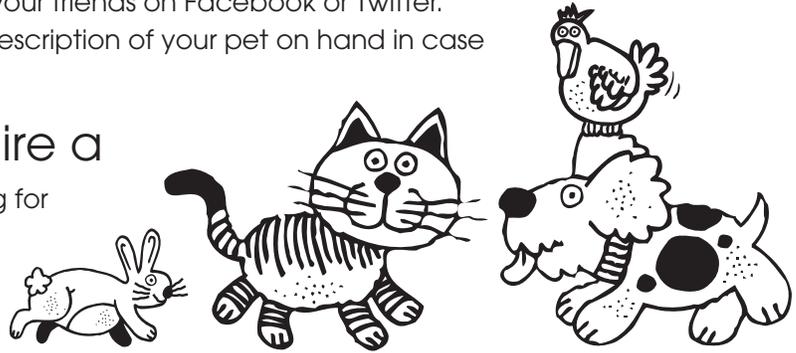


Place ads in local newspapers and see if you can pay for announcements by a local radio station or two. Utilize on-line sites such as fidofinder.com, craigslist.org and dogdetective.com. Consider using a lost pet alert service like findfido.org to contact homes in your area. Alert all your friends on Facebook or Twitter. Keep recent photos and a detailed description of your pet on hand in case you need them.

If you can afford to hire a pet detective,

start looking for one quickly. A tracking dog can sniff out your missing pet's path, but scent trails weaken over time. Ask for references and stay away from anyone who guarantees

success. Be wary of professional scam artists, such as someone who claims to have found your pet and asks for money before returning the animal.



Be persistent. Many people give up too soon and then when the pet is turned in to a shelter they've already stopped looking. Visit area shelters daily if possible. Many shelters quickly turn pets over to rescue groups, other shelters or foster homes after the initial 7 day holding period, so you need to keep checking in to prevent a found pet from being adopted out to someone else. Owners often check shelters too early or too late.

Sometimes good Samaritans who rescue pets don't call the owner because they perceive that a thin, dirty or injured pet was abused or mistreated in your home. If your pet is shy, include on the collar or tag "I'm shy, not abused." You might also want to have the word "reward" on your pet's ID. Some people will keep found pets themselves, others will take them to shelters outside your immediate area, especially if your pet is picked up by someone who is vacationing or traveling through your area. Even if your pet has been microchipped, a kind person who picks up the pet isn't going to know that.

This is not to say that microchipping isn't worthwhile. Many found pets are no longer wearing their collar. Your pet should have tags with current phone numbers and of course Rabies and license tags, but microchipping is a more fail safe method of permanent identification. All shelters and rescues are equipped to check pets for microchips. If your pet has one, make sure you update the information with the company your pet's chip is registered with if you move or change your phone number!

Once your pet has been found, it is courteous to go back around to the places you've hung signs or posted information, to remove them again. This will ensure that there is room for flyers that another frantic pet owner wants to hang up.

Caring People Helping Pets



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