



LOST PETS: WHAT TO DO TO FIND THEM, HOW TO PREVENT LOSS

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES: Make sure your pet always has some form of identification on it, with your current name, address and telephone number. Make sure fences are secure, doors are closed, and leashes and collars are in good condition and adequate to maintain control of your pet. Keep a photograph of your pet handy that you know will copy well.

IF YOU HAVE FOUND A LOST ANIMAL: Many of the things that owners do when they lose pets may help you find an animal's owner, so read the suggestions below for ideas on how to reunite a lost animal with its owner. One fact critically important for you to remember is that there is no way to tell how long a pet has been away from its owner, even if you see someone "dump" the animal right in front of you, or how it was treated by its owner. Animals can deteriorate quickly in strange situations. A few days on the street and an animal can look/act extremely abused and/or neglected. The animal may have been stolen minutes, hours, days, weeks months or even years before it came to be in your possession. (We know of one case in which an Tennessee animal was found over two years later in California!) Don't assume an owner does not want his/her pet unless they tell you so personally and I would talk to more than one member of the family before I assumed even that. (We know of a husband who took his wife's pets and dumped them without telling her when he got angry at her about something! This is also a common occurrence in divorces.) Things are NOT always what they seem to be.

IF YOUR PET IS MISSING: When a pet has left home for whatever reason, you must act quickly. Remember, your pet is lost, traveling, and crossing busy streets. The longer it is away, the slimmer your chance of recovering it and its chance of survival.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO LOCATE LOST PETS:

1. ***If possible, organize friends your pet is familiar with and patrol the area.*** Search by foot and by vehicle, calling the pet's name in a happy voice. Be extremely careful calling the pet's name near intersections or other locations where it could be injured coming when called. Place your pet's crate, toys, blanket, treats, food and water, near the last place it was seen - check it frequently. Remember: Animals may travel further than you expect. Organize your search accordingly. For example, a male dog can detect a female dog in heat as much as a 7 miles away and attempt to go to her. Start your search in the immediate area and gradually enlarge it. Continue to check in all areas.

2. ***Immediately place an advertisement in the lost and found sections of your newspaper,*** if during business hours. If not, call the next business day. Do not wait for someone to run a "found" ad, they may not do so. Also, place ads in all neighborhood papers distributed in your area. REWARDS HELP but keep it reasonable - \$25 to \$100.

Caution: Unscrupulous individuals may call claiming to have found or seen your pet. Never meet with anyone who claims to have found your pet who wants a reward alone. Always arrange to meet in a public place. Never give anyone money before they give your pet!

3. ***Call area animal shelters, humane societies, and other animal rescue organizations in your area.***

NOTE: Be advised that it is always best to go and check the shelters personally for your pet. For a number of reasons, it is difficult or impossible for shelter/rescue workers to correctly identify a dog by a description that you may provide over the telephone. Further, even if you provide a photograph of your dog to them for identification purposes, your pet's appearance may have changed radically since the photograph was made and/or the last time you saw it and/or the individuals may not recognize it as the same animal or care if they do.

4. ***Call all veterinarians and pet and feed stores in your area*** - see the telephone book for listings - in case someone turns an animal into them or tries to get the animal treated.

5. ***Make bright, colorful signs, posters and flyers,*** stating the type or breed of your pet, its color, any distinguishing marks, the date lost, a reward amount (if any), and all available phone numbers. Attaching a photograph is very helpful. You can copy a good photograph onto a flyer for distribution. Follow up. Place notices on bulletin boards at all the locations you have already contacted. Canvas your area thoroughly. Distribute flyers at all shopping centers, Post Offices, and street corners, vet's offices, pet stores, and feed stores. The more places you put flyers, the better your chances are to recover your pet.

6. ***Talk to people, especially children, homeowners, sanitation workers, postal employees - anyone who***

will listen. Give them each a flyer.

7. After the first day, GO to local animal shelters, WALK THROUGH, and LOOK for your pet on a daily basis, if possible. Shelter employees may not be able to tell you if your pet is there. Many animals are incorrectly identified by shelter employees. DO NOT DEPEND ON PRE-RECORDED LISTINGS FURNISHED BY ANIMAL SHELTERS. THEY ARE, AT BEST, ONLY PARTIAL LISTINGS. CHECK FOR YOURSELF. Do not assume if, after a few days if your animal does not turn up in the shelter, that it will never do so. It could days, weeks, months or even years later.

8. Consult your local CITY DIRECTORY (can be found at the Library) and block out a six-block area and call every phone number listed in it. Ask if anyone has seen your pet.

9. Plan an extended search period - sometimes someone "helps" your pet become lost. It can be dumped, abandoned or even escape days, weeks or months later.

10. If you need emotional support for your search and/or to deal with your loss - contact a Pet Loss Support Group. There is usually no charge for this type of service.

11. Don't waste a lot of time and emotion on worrying about your pet being stolen by "bunchers" to sell to class "B" dealers for resale to research. It is possible but it is not probable. Animals are being stolen and it may be that professionals are involved. What these individuals might be doing with the animals is, at this point, undetermined. What we do know is that, at times, over-zealous individuals, if they suspect abuse, cruelty and/or neglect are stealing animals. This has been documented. Of course, their definition of abuse, cruelty and/or neglect may be nothing more than the fact an animal was left in its backyard unattended while its owner enjoyed a quick cup of coffee in the morning or something else equally inconsequential. While other reasons are possible, it is important to remember that most crimes are committed by someone the victim knows, so, in all likelihood, an owner knows the person is responsible but does not know who it is or does not want to believe it.

12. Think twice before hiring a pet detective! Pets can usually be found without their expensive assistance. One possible exception: If you cannot, for some reason, do what is necessary to find your pet yourself. Check references and with the Better Business Bureau before you hire anyone. Make sure they are licensed and bonded. Require a contract in writing specifying a reasonable hourly rate and set maximum number of hours for specific tasks with a "bonus" if and when your pet is found.

LOST & FOUND WEBSITES:

The Internet Lost and Found: <http://www.internetlostandfound.com/>

DISCLAIMER: We make no warranties or guarantees concerning these suggestions. They are suggestions only. We hope they will help you find your pet but we cannot guarantee they will. Should you have other, additional ideas about how to locate your pet, you should pursue those avenues also.