

Before your Pet Goes Missing...

Make sure your pet is wearing a collar and tags, and is microchipped.

A collar and tag is the first thing a person who finds a lost pet looks for to see who the pet belongs to. This is why you should ALWAYS have a collar with identification on your pet even if he/she is in the house or just playing outside in your fenced yard. One of the most common calls we get is that their dog's collar was removed for a bath when the dog was lost.

No matter how careful you are, doors and gates get left open, dogs dig holes under fences...anything can happen. This is why getting your pet microchipped is also extremely important!

A microchip is a very small device, about the size of a grain of rice which is inserted under the skin in a method similar to a vaccine injection. The microchip will last your pet's lifetime

Make a file for your pet

If you have multiple pets, you should have a file for each. The file should have a good picture of your pet, along with a description, date missing, sex, height, approx. weight, coloring, notable injuries or scars and any special needs like medications.

Make sure you update your pets profile with a good photo of your pet, along with any info that would be useful in identifying your pet. Please understand that while your pet is unique to you, many purebred dogs look the same, or very similar. But, most dogs have one unique feature which can serve as an "identifier," such as a black spot over an eye or a grey hair on its muzzle.

Make sure to include your cell phone as a contact number. Chances are you will be out searching for your pet and not at home to receive any calls if your pet is spotted.

The next time you are at the vet, have your pet scanned to ensure the chip is registered with your updated contact information.

Consider making a lost flyer in advance to keep in your file.

Pet Microchip Companies

Home Again –	888-466-3242
AVID -	800-336-2843
AVID Euro -	800-336-2843
AKC -	800-252-7894
24PetWatch	866-597-2424
Bayer ResQ	877-738-5465
Banfield	877-567-8738

After your Pet goes Missing

Time is of the essence. The longer your pet is missing, the less likely your chances of recovering your pet. Many of the tips are most useful if executed immediately after your pet has gone missing. By taking a few moments now, to put together your own “Lost Pet” package for each of your pets, you will be ready to start getting the word out about your pet’s disappearance.

Alert the microchip company immediately, so they can start alerting their network. If you have registered your pet’s number with more than one company, be sure to alert them all!

Make a flyer:

- Do not put your name or address for security reasons. Offer a reward, but don’t put the amount. Leave out an identifying feature on your pet so it is more difficult for anyone trying to “scam” you.
- Consider creating a flyer in Spanish or any other prevalent language in your area.
- In addition to having the poster, you should also have a list of every 24hr vet, animal shelter, police station, rescue & newspaper within your local area. You can use Google Maps or Yahoo Local to track down this information. Just enter your zip code as your default location and do searches on vet, pet rescue, police, etc. Write down

your pet's microchip number, as well as the service provider's number, so they can be alerted even if you are not at home. Also keep a copy or copy or original of the dog's rabies certificate.

- Create multiple copies of the flyer so you can start posting them immediately. Keep a heavy duty stapler w/staples and tape in your car so you can begin posting flyers immediately.
- If your pet is sick or injured, he/she may hide in dark places and be unable to come out to you so have a powerful flashlight. Check storage sheds, garages, dumpsters, trash cans, and under cars.
- Enlist the help of friends & family - there is strength in numbers.

If you are missing your cat, make sure you check in every nook & cranny in your home. Cats have been known to get themselves wedged in the smallest of spaces or locked in closets and basements. Expand your search to under porches, neighbor's sheds, and garages.

Post flyers everywhere – the bigger/brighter the better! Telephone Poles, supermarkets, post offices, banks, pet stores, groomers, gas stations, restaurants, etc....any store window you can find. Be sure to check back often to see if the poster is missing or damaged. Give them to mail carriers, public works employees and any neighbors you see.

Call your non-emergency police number after each shift change to make sure the new dispatcher is aware of your missing pet.

Enlist the help of a dog. While a dog may be too scared to come out around strange people, they may be more inclined to come out around a familiar dog pal. If you don't have another dog, try your pet's favorite squeaky toy so he/she can hear a familiar "happy" sound, can help bring him/her out if hiding in the bushes.

Spread the word online. Send an email to all your friends and ask them to forward it on to anyone in the area. Use Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites.

There are a few websites listed which may help. For a cat-specific service, try www.TabbyTracker.com.

www.missingpetpartnership.com This website has valuable behavioral info on how missing pets may act.

www.petfinder.com You can place a free classified ad for your missing pet
www.findfido.com

www.missingpetpartnership.org

www.craigslist.com You must join to post, but there are very active people who peruse the pet section trying to match up lost and found pets.

Personally visit local shelters, DAILY if possible. Calling shelters is not always enough. Many shelters have hundreds of animals and your pet may not be easily distinguishable.

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 may euthanized. There have been stories of a pet being euthanized or adopted out, even though the pet owner had called the shelter about the missing pet.

Make sure you leave a copy of your pet's lost poster with shelter staff. Speak frequently to them so they all know you are looking for your pet. The more often you call, the more likely the staff will specifically remember to look for your pet when new animals come in.

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 or email the rescue groups regularly to see if they have your pet.

If you have a purebred animals, call and email breed-specific rescue groups. These rescues may not be local, but pull animals from shelters if they find out about them. So if you are missing your pug, be sure to contact all the Pug or small dog Rescues in your state.

Check out all the local papers for Found Pets and place a Lost Pet classified. With consolidation in the newspaper industry, sometimes one paper owns many of the smaller papers and shares a single call center for classifieds.

Animals tend to move in the early mornings (5am-7am) or at dusk. Be sure you are out looking during those time frames, especially if your pet is typically not social, or is frightened.

What to do once you have a sighting

Once you have a spotting, let the owner go to that spot, all others create a wide circle around that area but let the owner quietly call. Bring a familiar dog if possible.

At dusk, leave a crate with some of your dirty clothes and some food/water. Leave more clothes around creating a scent trail back to the crate. Or, use your dog's bed, or blanket from home.

Get permission when entering private property. Be SURE to ask permission of the owner to go onto the property and let him/her know with how many people will be involved. Be polite and respectful.

Caution

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 – meet in a public place and bring a friend.

A common scam is a trucker calls, claiming to have picked up your pet and is now out of state. He heard about your ad, flyer, etc. and says he will return your pet if you will pay to ship it home. Tell this person to take your pet to the local shelter where they can make transportation arrangements.

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

Make sure you go back and remove the flyers you have posted.

If you placed your dogs missing information online, makes sure you go back and mark them as "safe".

Thank everybody who has helped you.

A few things to keep in mind

Extreme weather conditions (snow, hail, rain, and sweltering heat) will decrease the distances that lost dogs travel.

A dog that escapes in a residential area will not travel as far as a dog that escapes in a more rural area. Fences that create barriers will influence a dog's travel since a dog will tend to take the "path of least resistance" when traveling.

How a dog looks like can influence how quickly it will be picked up by a rescuer. People are less inclined to try to grab a loose Pit Bull they perceive as being "aggressive" than they would a "friendly" Lab.

People will try to pick up small dogs because they look vulnerable and are easier to transport than large dogs. People are more likely to attempt to rescue a purebred dog they perceive to have value than a mixed breed dog. When people see a mixed breed dog trotting down the sidewalk, their impression is often that the dog belongs in the neighborhood or that it is a homeless stray. But when those same people see a purebred, they are inclined to believe it is a "valuable purebred dog," and it must be a lost pet.

People who find strays often misinterpret the dog's behavior; they assume that the cowering, fearful dog was "abused" when in fact the dog has been shy and fearful since it was a puppy, due to genetics and puppy hood experiences. Many rescuers who find a stray dog that does not have a collar automatically assume it is "homeless" and therefore they immediately work to place the dog rather than attempt to find the dog's owner. In addition, the first place the owner of a lost dog will search for his or her dog - the local shelter - is typically the last place that someone who finds a loose dog will take it due to fear of euthanasia.