

## What To Do If Your Dog Is Lost

### WHILE YOUR PET IS SAFE AT HOME, TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT A FUTURE TRAGEDY:

1. Take clear identification photos, including a head shot and front and side views showing the pet's entire body.
2. Make notes of any distinctive markings or traits that would make the animal easy to identify.
3. Make sure your pet has tags with one or two phone numbers where someone can always be reached.
4. Consider getting your pet microchipped by your vet. **BE SURE TO REGISTER YOUR DOG'S MICROCHIP NUMBER AND INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.** As an alternative, get them tattooed and register the number. **YOUR PET SHOULD ALWAYS WEAR AN ID TAG, EVEN IF CHIPPED OR TATOED.** Not every shelter or rescue has a microchip scanner; not all use them if they do (especially on mixed breed pets); and many chip scanners do not read all brands and frequencies of microchips.
5. Never let your pet off-leash in an unfenced area, keep your gates padlocked, and don't leave pets outside alone, even in a fenced yard, if you're leaving for work or errands. Pets can dig or climb out of fenced areas or be stolen while you're away.

### IF YOUR PET DOES GO MISSING:

First, thoroughly check your house and yard before panicking. It's amazing the tight / inconspicuous spots animals can get themselves into. Look in the bathtub, check the clothes dryer and toilet bowl for small pets (really! or better, don't leave the cover up), in closets, shine a powerful flashlight under the house, in and under cars, etc. **Once you're sure your pet is no longer on your property, START SEARCHING IMMEDIATELY.** The longer you wait, the greater the risks to your pet. Ask family and friends to help. Make sure everyone has a leash, collar and flashlight if searching after dark.

Walk (don't take the car) around the neighborhood calling to them. Ask anyone you see outside if they've spotted your pet. Knock on doors at every house.

If your dog is microchipped, call your chip registration service and report the dog lost.

Call or talk to delivery people (Fedex, UPS, postal carriers) and anyone who works outside in your neighborhood (pool and lawn service, construction workers, garbage workers, etc.).

Post easy-to-read signs at all entrances to your neighborhood (or wherever the pet was lost) and for several blocks surrounding. These need to be readable from a fast-moving car, so use a few critical words, big type and a photo. Here's an example:

**LOST  
(Photo of Pet)  
REWARD!  
555-555-5555**

- While you're out putting up signs, don't forget to read any signs previously posted. Someone may already have found your pet.
- Make more detailed flyers, including information about the dog's age, breed, gender (and whether neutered, for males), whether it was wearing a collar and tags, and any other distinctive characteristics or behaviors, along with a good photo. Put these in mailboxes for several blocks surrounding the area your pet was last seen. (Don't worry about the postal carrier complaining. Your dog is LOST.) Also post these in public places where people can stop and read them, like supermarkets, post offices, vet offices, etc.
- Place a Lost Pet ad in the daily newspaper and those shoppers' guides that get delivered by mail. Most will let you do this for free. Again, offer a reward, but do not specify how much. Run this ad for at least a few weeks or until you pet is found. Also, CHECK THE "FOUND PETS" ADS DAILY!
- Call your local radio stations. Many have pet corner segments advertising lost and found pets, usually free.
- Post your pet's description and photo on missing pet websites and internet groups like FidoFinder.com or petclub.org.
- Notify and give flyers to Animal Control, your local or county police, local shelters, and rescue groups. Check with the shelters and rescues DAILY and visit every other day! Many shelters hold animals only 3-5 days before euthanizing. Don't assume that they will remember your call should your pet show up. Make sure they know if your pet is microchipped.
- The first morning after your dog is lost, **at sunrise**, go to the location your pet was lost with a pen and pad. Write down the company name of services making deliveries at that hour. Some examples are bread, milk and newspaper delivery services. Call the dispatch offices for those companies, give them a description of your pet and ask that they alert their drivers. Most pets recovered while still on the street are found during the quiet early morning hours and then hide when the tempo picks up. If possible, follow up with a flyer. Do the same at places where a dog may go to look for food and water (e.g., restaurants).
- Consider hiring a search and rescue dog or pet detective service to help locate your pet.
- If you suspect that your pet was stolen, alert the police to your suspicions. Pets are often stolen for sale to research laboratories or for use in training fighting dogs. Time is of the essence, and persistence pays!
- If your pet is missing for more than a few days, broaden your search area. Don't underestimate how far a pet can travel!
- Keep searching. Pets can disappear for months and still show up or be found.

Once your pet is found, be sure to take down all flyers and internet posts, cancel newspaper ads, and notify and thank all individuals and businesses who helped with your search.