

The Lost Pet Recovery Guide

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Introduction

Every two seconds, someone's life is changed – for the worst. Their pet is lost! According to the National Humane Society and the National Council of Pet Population Study and Policy, 10 million pets are lost each year.

When a pet owner first finds out that their pet is lost, a rush of feelings can easily overwhelm him or her. There are moments of panic, a sense of urgency, a sense of loss, and even a bit of guilt.

Often the feelings that your pet provides for you – unconditional love, happiness, joy, peacefulness, and contentment are missing when your pet is lost.

You must get your pet back! You must start a coordinated search plan that allows you to do everything you possibly can to create a positive outcome in a situation that is not starting out good!

This guide will help you put together your very own coordinated search and increase the chance that your dog or cat will return home, turning the whole incident from tragedy to adventure.

So stay cool and collected and let's get to work. Let's do the things it takes to feel that unconditional love, happiness and joy once again!

Chapter 1

When Does Your Search Begin?

Your search for Rex, Fluffy or Max the Mouse Chaser starts the second that you discover that your pet is lost. And when you first find out that your pet is lost, It's possible that you could be in one of several places and receive a phone call that Rex is gone.

Look at some of the many places where people with lost pets are when they find out:

- at work, with six hours to go in before you can leave.
- at the grocery store, standing in a long line at Costco
- on the road, driving to an important appointment
- at the dentist's or doctor's office
- another part of the house from where your pet usually is
- on a vacation away from home for the next 10 days
- visiting neighbors or relatives

No matter where you are when you receive the news that your pet is missing, you must take action immediately. Don't postpone taking action until you get home from the doctor's office. Your doctor's appointment could take 30 minutes and by the time you get home, it could be a full hour, or even two hours! Every minute counts! The sooner you can start looking, the sooner you can find your pet. If you're not in a location where you can start the search immediately, you must make phone calls to someone who will do it for you.

Every minute counts because the longer your pet is gone, the smaller the chances that your pet will be found. Sure, there are cases where a dog traveled hundreds of miles to get home and two years later, showed up on the doorstep looking like a different dog. He had been through a lot, just to come back home and put his head on the knee of his owner one more time. And to that dog and the pet owner, the trip was worth it! But these cases are very few and far between.

When you discover your pet is lost, you must act NOW. Consider your lost pet AN EMERGENCY. One of your family members is gone. It's time to bring that family member back home again. You must interrupt your schedule and take care of this situation.

Don't let anyone convince you that it's not A FAMILY EMERGENCY with words like, "Oh, he probably just wandered off..." or "Why don't you wait until after dinner to start searching?"

The truth is that if your pet wandered off, he may have wandered off into the arms of danger. And if you wait until after dinner, it could get dark before you find him, and that means that your pet will be out there – somewhere – all night long. Darkness makes it a lot harder for you to find your pet. Think of how much area your eyes can cover in the light of the day compared to at night when you're walking around with a flashlight. Night searches can give one a sense of false security that the pet is not in the area searched.

Chapter 2

Where Could Your Pet Be?

Where your pet is right now is not determined by chance. There's a definite trend to the places where you may find your lost cat or dog.

To figure out yourself where your pet is, step into the paws of your dog or cat right now.

One pet detective reports that 90% of his missing pet clients find their dog in a 1 to 2-mile radius of home sweet home or where they were reported missing. If the area is rural, the lost zone is about 5 miles. For cats, the lost zone is one mile.

Lost pets are known to circle the one to five-mile radius, trying to get home.

The type of adventure your pet has away from your home during its time lost is determined by:

- *Pet's personality*
- *Pet's size*
- *Pet's breed*
- *How your pet escaped*

Adventures of Lost Dogs

For example, if your pet is a small white Maltese dog named Tiger that only loves you and snaps at your friends or anyone who comes near, then Tiger is possibly going to have a pretty difficult time out there in the wild all alone unless a Maltese breeder or Maltese rescue group member finds him. That's because if someone drives by Tiger and thinks that she's cute and stops to pick her up, she may bite them. No Good Samaritan wants to deal with a mean dog if it means getting bit and a trip to the emergency room. The Good Samaritan may drive on, leaving the dog, and possibly make a call to the local shelter that Tiger is on the loose. People's imaginations like to run wild and many Good Samaritans could easily deduce that your charming little Tiger is mean or even rabid.

Thus, Tiger really needs YOU to bring him home. He just doesn't trust anyone else.

If your pet is a Jack Russell Terrier named Lady that gives everyone kisses and the type of dog that has manners and listens to your commands, obeying willingly, then a Good Samaritan who finds Lady will possibly take her home.

Lady will be treated well and played with by the children in the family. The mom or dad that took Lady home probably won't call the shelter for a day or two and the family will start to fall in love with her.

Lady is a dog that can easily adapt to a new home situation. That's good for Lady, but bad for you. This is a situation where you will have to intervene and never give up. After all, Lady belongs to you, not the new family.

Pets that somehow slip out of an open door or open gate in the backyard generally have a different adventure than a pet that was mistreated by its owner and couldn't wait for an opportunity to escape. It could be that your pet is an Escape Master and just loves to decipher ways to escape to pass the time away when you're away at work. The Escape Master pet will essentially, "run for its life" in search of freedom and a new life once an opening occurs as the gate is left open by the delivery man leaving the package or the little girl who comes over to feed him treats occasionally.

When an Escape Master type of pet meets someone on his adventure of being lost, he'll probably make a snap judgment of that person. If the person reminds him of people that have mistreated him, his brain will tell him to make a run for freedom once again. Each time the pet runs for his life, that lost zone could potentially increase another 2 or more miles.

It's good to know which category your dog falls into – if he's made a run for freedom or if he's simply wandered off on a wonderful adventure. But the bottom line is that ultimately if Tiger is gone more than a few hours, then you'll take the same steps in your search as someone who had an Escape Artist pet.

Adventures of Lost Cats

Now sit back for a minute and think as if you are your loving cat that was just chased by a dog, raccoon or coyote. Your main goal is to get away and get to a safe hiding spot. You'll stay in that safe hiding spot until all is clear, even if it takes several hours. This is similar to the situation of a scared cat climbing up a tree to escape a predator that ends up staying there until the firemen rescues it.

Your cat Max the Mouse Chaser may already know some safe hiding spots, such as open outside vents that lead to the space below a house foundation, a hole in the big oak tree in the back yard, that wood pile on the side of the house, or behind the garbage can.

If Max the Mouse Chaser escaped because he was looking for a Maxina, then he's on the trail of the love scent. He probably won't be back until he has found a sweetheart. The pursuit can take him into unknown territory where he suddenly finds himself all alone without any idea where he is. He's clearly lost and now he is depending on you or a kind stranger to bring him in out of the cold to eat another great meal.

In both these situations, your cat is probably far beyond the lost zone of one mile from where he became lost.

If Max is primarily an indoor cat but escaped because a door was inadvertently left open, then he will most likely stay within a block of your house. He's out exploring his new world having the time of his life ... until a loose dog or predator starts chasing him. At this point in time, he will act like any cat that is chased by a predator, searching for a quick hideaway to stay in for a few hours or more.

It's great if you can determine how your cat became lost. But the fact is that you probably have no idea how or why Max the Mouse Chaser got out. Do you ever follow Max's mating pursuits? Probably not. So the point here is that no matter what the scenario, start your search looking at all possible hiding places cats can go. Do this around your house and your property before you start searching the streets.

You'll find a checklist in a later chapter that will tell you step by step what to do.

Where Pets End Up

When a pet is lost, it usually ends up roaming the streets until the pet finds another home or ends up getting picked up by humans. Of course, there's always another fate, one that isn't so pretty: the pet ends up in the mouth of a predator or looking at the headlights of a car too long.

Pets that are picked up from Good Samaritans generally end up in the nice person's home. If the person falls in love with your pet, he or she may or may not report that your pet has been found. When a Good Samaritan does report the pet, there are three places that they may call: the local shelter, the animal control or local veterinarians.

The Local Shelter/Animal Control

When a Good Samaritan takes a dog to a shelter or an animal control officer picks up your pet roaming the streets, the animal will end up in a shelter or the SPCA. Once a pet makes it here, every hour of that pet's life is marked as one of its last hours.

Every shelter holds stray animals for only so many days. Some shelters only hold pets for 48 hours; others may give the pet a week or more; their timing varies from shelter to shelter, and state to state. Shelter policies depend on funding, pet population, and how friendly the animal is. According to animal control officers, a pet could be the nicest pet you have ever had at home but faced with the death row situation, may turn into a monster at the shelter. So don't depend on your dog's good nature to get him saved.

The Veterinarian's Office/Hospital

If your pet ends up at a veterinarian's office or hospital, most likely it won't be the veterinarian that takes the pet home. The veterinarian probably has more than three animals at home already! It's the staff at the veterinarian's office that most likely will either care for the pet themselves or try to find a foster home for the pet. The veterinarian staff may, though, end up taking the pet to the shelter.

Chapter 4

Using Local Media and Posters to Find Your Dog

Rarely will your lost pet story be “good enough” to make local news. If your pet is a local celebrity, then your local TV stations will possibly cover the story. If you can get a TV personality to cover your story, that’s the best situation that can occur. But don’t count on it.

The good news is that there are some radio stations that make announcements about lost pets, especially in smaller towns or smaller cities. However, if you aren’t familiar with them, now is not the best time to start listening to the radio to find out what radio show host will talk about little lost Lilly. Ask your friends if they know of any radio stations that make these announcements. If they don’t know any, move on to the next step.

Posters are your best bet to bring your lost pet home. People are motivated by rewards. If you’ll be offering a reward, decide on the amount. Will it be \$100 or \$250? If your dog is a purebred, you may want to increase the reward to \$500 or more. If you don’t have the money, then don’t offer a reward. Don’t “beat yourself up” about it if you aren’t financially set up to offer a reward. Simply depend on Good Samaritans, people in the community and prayer to bring your little lost one home.

Chapter 5

How to Engage Others in Your Search

The best way to recover your lost pet is to engage others in your search. After all, you can't be out on the streets combing them 24/7. Most likely your boss won't understand it if you say that you want to take off a week just to find your pet, unless your pet is a trained celebrity.

So who do you ask to join your search? The answer is literally everyone. You never know who will have a soft heart for pets that are lost.

Here's a list of possible people to ask to help you.

- ***Family members, cousins, aunts and uncles***
- ***Friends***
- ***Neighbors***
- ***Church members***
- ***Local schools***
- ***Fire departments***
- ***Veterinarians offices***
- ***Grocery stores***
- ***Restaurants***
- ***Gas stations***
- ***Small businesses***

Many people will want a poster or flyer for their store window, so make sure you have enough. Remember that you're going to cover the entire lost pet zone, from one to five miles around the point where the pet became lost.

Don't put the posters in mailboxes; this is illegal in the U.S. Don't put them on windshields of cars and trucks unless you want to get menacing calls from business owners when people throw them on the ground. They'll ask you to clean up their lot and you could have to pay a fine for trespassing.

Talk to everyone you meet and ask them if they've seen your lost pet. If they say no, don't get frustrated. All you need is one "Yes". Don't let your spirits get down in the dumps. Remember that most people don't find their lost pet for one main reason: they give up too soon.

Chapter 6

Facts You Should Know about Lost Pets

1. Just because your pet has a collar with its name and your phone number engraved on it does not insure that your pet will be coming home.

2. Just because your pet has a microchip does not mean that the microchip will be read.

It's unfortunate that if a Good Samaritan picks up your loving dog, he or she may not want to give the pet up to you, the rightful owner. In this case, the new pet owner will either lie to the veterinarian about where the animal came from or just pass off your pet as a "gift from God". In these cases, the veterinarian may not scan the animal for the microchip and the pet ends up in a new home until you track it down.

3. The reason why most people do not recover their lost pet is that they give up before they have put up a good fight to get their pet back. Don't make the same mistake. Posting 10 posters in the 2 mile lost zone simply isn't adequate! Talking to a dozen people is not adequate. Post and talk. Post and talk. Post and talk. That's your mantra when you lose a pet.

4. Your dog can survive outside for quite awhile. Cats, on the other hand, can develop fatty liver if they start starving. Both dogs and cats have higher levels of stomach acid and can drink water with a higher amount of contamination (like mud puddles) than humans can.

Chapter 7

Beware of Scams

Whether there are good times or bad times, there are always criminals who believe they can scam others or make a profit off of other people's misfortunes. As a pet owner of a lost pet, you are a target for these criminals. A common scam is where a caller reports that he or she has your pet and wants you to send the reward money first before you have a chance to even hold your pet in your arms. Don't fall for it! Always arrange to meet someone in person, and preferably near a police station.

"My best advice for finding a lost pet that was an indoor only pet is to put your clothes out around your house. Not clean clothes. Pajamas are first choice. They have your scent on them and if your cat is not used to being outside, he is most likely hiding under a bush trying to figure out where to go. Your scent could help him find his way home.

I did this one time several years ago and after my cat came home, I I got the giggles thinking about my mailman and how he must have wondered why my jammies were on the front porch! Ha!" --- Barbara

Chapter 8

Tracking Devices for Your Pet

The Good Old-Fashioned Pet ID Tag

Every pet should have one of these. A collar with a pet ID tag is inexpensive and can be obtained in about 10 minutes at most large chain pet stores.

Microchip

A microchip is easily inserted under the skin of the animal. The cost is usually less than \$35. Your veterinarian inserts the chip. It's important to ask your vet if you need to register the chip number with any national organization. Some microchips need to be registered after they are inserted. Your contact information must be updated periodically at your vet's and on the chip.

Dog License Number on the ID Tag

The license number of your dog is engraved on another pet tag, which is attached to the pet's collar. Just like the ID tag with your name and phone number on it, this ID tag can be ripped off a pet's collar if the animal gets the collar snagged onto some type of sharp object.

Alert Services

Several alert services online will send out emails when a pet is lost. However, emails may not be opened and read, which reduces effectiveness.

PetAmberAlert.com

PetAmberAlert.com is receiving plenty of good reviews. An Amber Alert is whereby actual posters are sent via express mail, email and faxed directly into the hands of the recipients. The recipients include local businesses, neighborhood watch members, local veterinarians, animal shelters, groomers, animal control, police stations, media outlets and pet stores. Your poster is received by thousands of people, pet businesses and agencies in the local area. Hundreds of people are looking for your pet throughout the day. When the pet is found, they call the hotline and then you are contacted with the good news.

The Hotline number is 1-877-875-PETS. Good Samaritans can also sign up for the Neighborhood Watch Program for lost pets on the website PetAmberAlert.com After signing up, they will receive Amber Pet Alerts within 50 to 200 miles of your registered zip code.

With thousands of eyes on the lookout for your pet, you can have the greatest chances of getting him or her back. It's an excellent way to prevent animal shelter euthanasia or adoption.

Using this system gets the word out quickly but it doesn't mean you still shouldn't do everything you can in your power to get your lost pet back.