

How To Find A Lost Dog Or Pet

compiled from various posts and excerpts on dog rescue e-mail lists

With all the extra outdoor activities of summer, it's not uncommon to hear about a friend or neighbor's lost pet. SPDR has compiled a list of tips and ideas you can use to help find a pet quickly and successfully:

1. Walk the Neighborhood
2. Put Out a Welcome Mat
3. Call Local Vets
4. Contact Kennel Clubs
5. Visit Animal Shelters
6. Contact Road Crews
7. Post Flyers
8. Advertise
9. Consider a Live animal trap
10. Consult With an Animal Communicator

1 Walk the Neighborhood

Walk all around your neighborhood, as large a circle as possible. Visit each home and talk to them, but don't travel alone... take a friend or family member with you.

Hand out 3x5 cards that have a description of your lost pet and your phone number. Leave the card attached to their door if they are not home.

DO NOT put flyers or notes in people's mailboxes, it's illegal.

Don't write down your name or address. Because of scam artists and other criminals in our society, it is never a good idea to publicize this information.

Offer a reward. Some people feel you should not state the amount,

others believe you should, and it should be a significant amount.

Talk to everyone you run across, including the postman, paperboy, children, parents waiting at the school bus stop, school crossing guards, neighborhood crime watch groups, garbage pick-up crews, etc. Give them your 3x5 cards and a picture of your pet if possible.

Try to get all the neighborhood children involved. Kids are great at finding lost pets!

Make some noise while you walk around the neighborhood! Animals can hear you from great distances.

Keep calling the pet's name.

If your pet has a favorite "squeaky toy" bring it along and use it to help you make familiar noises.

Use an "Acme Dog Whistle" to get your pet's attention. The high-pitched sound from these whistles can carry up to a mile or more. Cats are attracted to this sound as well as dogs. (Note: this whistle is the "silent" ultrasonic type, but has a simple adjustment that lowers the tone into the human audible range. Use this audible tone when searching for your pet because the sound will carry farther)

Carry a box of your pet's favorite treats and rattle it loudly while calling your pet's name.

Make any other noise that your pet is familiar with. It's also important to stop regularly, be quiet, and listen for your pet to make a noise in reply.

The neighbors will think you're crazy, but hey, this is your pet's life we're talking about here!

Bring a powerful flashlight (even during daylight hours) for checking in dark spaces. A frightened or injured cat or dog will hide in dark spaces and will not come to you. Use your flashlight for checking under houses and other dark spots. Also check storage sheds, garages, dumpsters, trash cans, and under cars.

2 Put Out The Welcome Mat

Place strong-scented articles outside your home to attract your pet. Animals find their way by scent as well as sound.

Place some of your dirty clothes outdoors. Sweaty gym socks and jogging suits are great for this! Place the pet's bedding and favorite toys outside.

Put out some smelly food such as tuna, sardines, or warm, freshly cooked chicken, liver, or other savory meat. Be sure to protect the food if you can, so that other animals don't eat it!

3 Call Local Vets

Call local veterinarian offices during the day. After 5 PM, call

Finding a Lost Pet...

veterinarian emergency clinics. Find out if your pet was injured and taken to any of these offices or clinics for treatment.

If an office has taken in or treated any animal that even remotely resembles your pet, VISIT THE OFFICE IN PERSON. Do not go on description alone. Your description of your pet and their description of the same pet rarely match. YOU MUST GO SEE FOR YOURSELF!

Also ask them for the phone numbers of local rescue groups. They generally keep a list and may even work with them. Call each of the rescue organizations and ask for their help and find out if they have your pet. These groups generally network with each other and will pass the word about your case.

If you create a flyer, don't fax it to the vet's office, it's best to mail or hand-deliver it so that the photo of your pet is much more clear (and in color, if you made color flyers).

4 Contact Kennel Clubs

If your pet is a purebred, call your local Kennel Clubs and Breed Clubs to pass the word about your lost pet to their members, friends and families. If you adopted your pet from a local rescue group, call them to enlist their help as well. Get the information out to as many people as possible.

5 Visit Animal Shelters

VISIT your local Animal Control, humane societies, and animal shelters, including the ones in surrounding areas. You can not expect to call them, you must actually VISIT the animal control and humane shelters every day or two. Remember, your description of your pet and their description rarely match, and shelter staff work different schedules. YOU MUST GO LOOK!

It works well if several friends and family members can take turns visiting the shelters.

When you visit the shelters, be sure to check all areas, including the infirmary. Also be aware that dogs may be housed in the cat section and vice-versa.

Leave your 3x5 card along with a picture of your pet at each shelter. Befriend the staff.

Find out the holding period ("stray hold") of each animal control and humane shelter. Be aware of how much time you have to claim your pet before it is euthanized. Government Animal Control agencies usually keep an animal for only 3 days and then they either adopt it out or euthanize it. You only get one chance at this. Be there!

It may be helpful to contact local rescue groups, as they are sometimes contacted by people who found a lost pet. SPDR does not handle lost or found animals, and will typically recommend

that "found pets" be taken to local shelters in order to give the owner time to locate their pet. However SPDR and other rescue groups may remove the pet from the shelter once its "stray hold" time period is up, in order to save the pet from euthanasia.

You can get the names and contact info of local rescue groups either from your local Animal Control, or better yet, peruse a complete list of local rescue groups on the PetFinder website: www.petfinder.org

This website features a "lost and found" pet area, which will help spread the word both to the local rescue groups as well as to the general public.

6 Contact Road Crews

Find out if your pet has been killed on the road. This is a very sad but necessary task. Otherwise, you may never know what happened to your pet and it could haunt you for years.

The road crews for your local and state department of transportation (DOT) usually pick up dead animals from the roadside and city streets. In some cases Animal Control does this as well. You have to call around and find out which agencies do this service in your area. Be sure to find them all! Dogs are usually picked up within 24 hours, but cats often are not.

continued on page 10

Finding a Lost Pet...

continued from page 9

Call the city, county, and state road crews, Department of Transportation and Animal Control EVERY DAY to see if they have found your pet's body. Make arrangements to visit their offices so you can speak with them face to face. Befriend them and leave a photo of your pet so the road crews can be on the lookout for it.

If any of them do not cooperate with your efforts, contact City Hall as a last resort and complain. This usually gets a response. But remember, you will get better results with courteous personal visits.

If your pet is wearing an ID tag, the DOT and/or Animal Control agencies should contact you if they find your pet dead along the road. But don't count on it. You must put forth the effort to find out for yourself! Sadly, this section has a higher "find" rate than anything else except posted flyers.

7 Post Flyers

It is extremely important to post MANY flyers about your lost pet within at least a 1-mile radius of where it was lost.

If possible, it is best to place a color photo of your pet on each flyer. Use 8-1/2" X 11" fluorescent paper for high visibility. List the date and place your pet was lost, breed of dog or cat, sex, age, weight, color, markings, and your telephone number.

Offer a reward. Some people feel you should not state the amount, others believe you should, and it should be a significant amount. Use your own best judgment.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME OR ADDRESS ON YOUR FLYER!

DO NOT put flyers or notes in people's mailboxes, it is against the law.

Your budget will determine how many flyers you can afford to post, but the more the better.

It is very important to always **WITHHOLD** several identifying marks and characteristics of your lost pet. You may need to use these later to verify that a person has actually found your pet and is not trying to scam you. More on this later.

Post the flyers at waist level on telephone poles and at eye level in such places as veterinary offices, pet shops, barber & beauty shops, grocery stores, community bulletin boards, churches, pizza parlors, laundromats, convenience stores, near schools, and on school bulletin boards.

Examine your posted flyers frequently and replace the ones that are missing or damaged.

Flyers or posters produce more "finds" than anything else, but don't neglect these other tips!

8 Advertise

Place an Ad in your local newspaper. Some will do lost dog ads for free. Be sure to advertise in the Sunday edition as well as during the week. Also place an ad in any "Penny Saver" type of publications you might have in your area.

Check the newspaper "found" ads every day. Most newspapers provide free ads to people who have found lost pets. Also check regularly in any other local publications.

Call in to any radio station local "community bulletin board" or talk type shows.

Post a lost dog notice on the website www.petfinder.org — they have sections for every area in the United States.

Don't ever give up! Pets have been known to find their way back home after being lost for several months. Good luck!

9 Consider Setting A Live animal trap

Have-A-Heart live animal traps come in a variety of sizes, from small (cat size) to huge (large dog). The only difficulty with using one of the larger traps is if you need to transport the trap with the pet inside of it — you'll need someone strong enough to lift and transport it. Sometimes Animal Control will loan a large trap like this, or rental may be an option.

Finding a Lost Pet...

continued from page 10

Camouflage the trap with brush, piles of hay, branches, or whatever is natural to the area, or at least cover it with a blanket or sheet that has your scent on it. Place fresh (fragrant) food inside, with a little food on the outside of the trap leading up to it.

Set the trap in an area where you (assisted by family and friends where possible) can take turns watching the trap all during the night (from a nearby parked car, the window of a house, or even a tent) so that it can be checked frequently. No chatting allowed, no radio, and preferably no coffee because it will require bathroom breaks.

Some people have had luck using X-Pens as a trap, with a rope to pull the pen shut from a hidden location. This form of trap would probably work best for dogs who are not very skittish, suspicious, or able to jump over the height of an X-pen.

10 Consider An Animal Communicator

Many people have had luck working with animal communicators to help locate their missing pets. A few communicators that have been called upon by SPDR volunteers include Colleen Aldrich, Vicki Holt, and Raphaella Pope. Call SPDR if you need their contact information.

A Few Words Of Caution

There are dangerous people in our society who prey upon victims by using "found" pets as a ploy. NEVER respond to a "found" pet contact alone. Take a friend or two along with you, and arrange to meet in a public place. Likewise don't wander around looking for your pet alone, either during the day or at night, particularly in unfamiliar neighborhoods. NEVER invite a person into your home unless you happen to know them well.

Beware of money scams, such as a person calling you claiming to be a long-haul trucker. He says he picked up your pet and is out of state now. He heard about your ad, flyer, etc. and says he will return your pet if you will pay to ship it home. This person does not have your pet, he is only trying to take your money.

Never give out all of the identifying features of your lost pet. Use that information to screen the person who claims to have found your pet. If they cannot describe these features to you, they do not have your pet!

When You Find Your Pet

Go around and collect up all of your old flyers.

Thank everyone.

Make good on your reward, if/where appropriate.

How To Protect Your Pet

Safeguard your pets before they are lost by following the common sense tips below:

Pet-proof your yard/fence so your pet will be safely confined. Be sure to check your fence regularly for new escape routes.

Keep fence gates securely locked. This is for the safety of both your pet and any visitors (wanted or unwanted). Add a gate spring if your lock is not fail-safe.

If you live in the city where meter readers must enter your yard to examine your water or electricity meters, make sure they can either gain access without coming through your fence, or if they must enter your fenced area, post a visible sign saying "Please close gate securely to keep pets in."

Never allow your pets to roam free in the neighborhood. Leash them at all times. Always leash your dogs when taking them anywhere, even if just from your car to your front door, and especially when you are away from home. If a dog gets loose in an unfamiliar area, its chances of finding its way home are low.

Train your pet to associate an "Acme Dog Whistle" with pleasant things. Blow the whistle each time just before you feed them. They will then be more likely to come running to you when you use the whistle to find them when they are lost.

continued on page 12

Finding a Lost Pet...

continued from page 11

Always keep a collar on your pet with a tag that has your CURRENT PHONE NUMBER on it. You can be found by the number on the tags. A collar and phone tag are the most important form of ID you can have for your pet.

Always have a CURRENT rabies tag and pet license tag attached to your pet's collar.

For extra security, talk to your vet about a microchip implant. A chip provides positive and reliable identification for your pet and all modern shelters routinely scan "found" animals for this ID device. Find out which brand of chip is prevalent in your area and go with that one.

If you've moved since your pet was last microchipped, BE SURE to contact the national company with whom your microchip is registered to update your contact info with your new address and phone numbers.

Also ask your vet about pet tattoos. If done correctly, they can provide positive identification. However, a tattoo is often very difficult to read because hair has grown over it and/or the lost animal is frightened and will not allow inspection. If you do use a tattoo, the best place to apply it is on the inner thigh. Pet thieves have been known to cut off a tattooed ear!

Spay or neuter your pets. Both males and females will be much less likely to wander if they are

"fixed." An added benefit is that they will live a longer, happier, healthier life if they are spayed or neutered.

Get some good photos of your pet now. Take close-up shots so that details show up well. Keep taking shots until you get a few good ones that really look like your pet. Most snapshots of pets look like any other cat or dog. You want your photos to be unique and your pet to be unmistakable. These photos will be invaluable to you later if your pet is ever lost.

Last but not least, ensure that YOU can be located if your pet is found.



Foster Home Coordinator?

SPDR is in need of a new Foster Home Coordinator to oversee approximately 200 foster home volunteers. Duties include:

- receive applications
- contact new volunteers
- provide foster information to breed reps
- enter new foster home data into the computer
- keep in regular communication with foster volunteers via e-mail.

These duties can be done via telephone, mail, and e-mail. Interested? Contact Kirsten Gleb at 425-343-6505, kirsten@gleb.net, or leave a message on the SPDR message line at (206) 654-1117.



Those dog (and cat) days of summer...