

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PET GETS LOST

Notify your local police department, Animal Control, and shelters/humane societies in your area. Dogs can wander surprisingly far away so don't just call those in your immediate area, go farther afield. Also notify all local veterinary clinics including emergency clinics. Make a list of those you notify so that when you find your pet, you know who you need to call. (In other words, once your pet is found you absolutely should go back and take all your signs down and call to let everyone know the pet has been found.)

Use the internet! Facebook is a great resource. Also list your pet's information on Lost Dogs of Wisconsin (or whatever state you live in).

Make flyers. Insert your flyers into sheet protectors to keep them safe from water. List your pet's name, a description (including whether your pet was wearing collar, microchipped, etc.). Put a picture of your pet on the flyer, and list your name(s) and phone number(s). If your pet is shy or timid, it is very helpful to list that info on the flyer as well. "DO NOT CHASE, CALL US IMMEDIATELY" is a great phrase to have on the flyer if your pet is shy/timid. Any pet will go into survival mode within a day or so of going missing. Chasing them only makes them more terrified and increases the risk that they will frantically dart out into traffic or hurt themselves.

Make some larger posters, visible to drivers passing in their cars, and put them at every major intersection. This will not only let people know your pet is missing, but hopefully it will help drivers to go slower and be more attentive. Foam poster board is a great material to use because it is fairly water resistant. You can use your flyers if the picture & the word LOST are large enough to see from the road, or modify them to be larger. Use packing tape to secure them to the foam poster board. Metal shish kabob sticks make for good supports to put the posters into the ground. They are sturdy and will help keep the poster board from folding over. They are easy to insert into the ground. Secure them to the back of the poster board with packing tape.

Go to houses in the area where your pet went missing. Talk to as many people as you can to help spread the word. If homeowners aren't home, leave a flyer in their mailbox or on their front door. Let people know that if they see your pet, the best thing to do is to lie down flat. This is less intimidating to the pet, and may cause them to become curious and approach the person.

If you have access to motion sensor or infrared cameras, such as ones used to view wild animals, you may be able to see your pet and know it is close to home but hiding. You can also use cameras to watch any live traps you've set out.

Live traps sometimes work well for smaller pets, especially missing cats. Again, use the internet! Someone may have live traps they are willing to loan to you. Often times Animal Control or the local humane society has live traps that you can borrow as long as you put down a deposit. Water and an item that smells like you and your pet should be placed inside the live traps. This can be something small like a washcloth or a sock. Rub it on your pet's bed and on yourself to pick up the scents. Remember to let the police department and animal control know that you have live traps set up and where they are located. These MUST be checked often throughout every day. Any animal caught in the traps needs to be dealt with. Your safety is the most important thing so DO NOT attempt to release a wild animal that gets caught - notify Animal Control.

Weather permitting, opening your windows and using fans is a great way to get the scent of your home outside. This can sometimes help your pet to find its way home. Surround the outside of your home with things like your pet's bedding, blankets, towels, etc. Spend time outside as well so that your pet can smell/see you if they are close by.

Think like an animal. What are good places to hide from predators? What are good places to seek shelter? What are good places to seek food and water? Check under decks, pools, cars, etc. Check around dumpsters near grocery stores, public parks, restaurants, etc.

DO NOT GIVE UP. Keep the faith, keep searching and keep notifying people. It is always important to keep your pet up to date on vaccinations! This will help keep them healthy when they are missing and it is less of a risk to the person(s) who attempt to catch them.

If and when you do find your pet, call all the police departments, humane societies, etc., to let them know so they can update their log books and take signs down. It's frustrating for people working at shelters and police departments to have dozens of reports of lost pets that are no longer lost cluttering up their files and making it more difficult for them to focus on pets who really are still in need of help.

Caring People Helping Pets



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