

How to Find Your Lost Pet

If you've lost your pet, don't waste any time – begin your search immediately.

Here are some steps to take:

- Ask everyone: neighbors, children, mail carriers, passersby. Show them a photo of your pet. Even if they have not seen him, they may be willing to keep an eye out for him.
- Create a flyer with your pet's photo, a brief description and your phone number. Distribute the flyers and post them on telephone poles in the area where you lost your pet. If you can afford it, you might consider offering a reward.
- Put a "lost pet" ad in the local newspapers. The ad should be titled "Lost Cat" or "Lost Dog" and should include your phone number, the date that the animal was lost, where she was last seen, and a clear, brief description containing the animal's name, breed, color, sex, age, and whether she was wearing a collar. (Note: If you're offering a reward, you might want to leave out one detail, such as gender, in order to avoid scam artists.)
- Go to all the shelters in the area – don't just call. Give them a color photo of your pet with your phone number on it. Ask to see all the animals in the shelter and visit every cage.
- Go back and check all the shelters every day. Shelter employees are often very busy, so you can't depend on someone remembering that an animal like yours was brought in.
- Call the local animal control officer in all the surrounding areas. Send each a photo and visit their pounds daily.
- Call area veterinary clinics and send them a photo of your pet. Ask each of them if any animal fitting your pet's description has been brought in.
- If you suspect that your pet may have been stolen, report your pet missing to the police. They may know if an animal fitting your pet's description has been hit by a car (or they may be able to direct you to the department that handles this).
- Read the "pet found" section in the local newspapers daily. Many papers run "found" ads for free. Follow up on any ad that describes an animal similar to yours, since you can't count on the finder to describe your pet exactly as you would.
- Look around your neighborhood carefully (or wherever your pet was lost). Cats can wander into a neighbor's basement or garage, fall asleep and accidentally get shut in.
- Late at night or very early in the morning, when the area is quiet, go to the place where your pet was lost. Bring his favorite food and a flashlight. Call his name and wait to see if he shows up. Try this repeatedly.
- If your pet is an indoor cat who does not usually get out, place her litter box outside, where she may smell her own scent and recognize her home. (Do not clean it out first!)
- If your pet is registered with a lost-pet network organization, call them right away.
- Don't give up! Persistence is often the key to finding a lost pet. Some animals have been found after months of being missing.