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Lost Pet Prevention and Pet Recovery

Do you have a plan for your pet?

An unlatched gate or broken collar can turn a fun time outside in the yard to a terrifying search for a lost pet. Bad things can happen to even the most responsible pet owners.

Any family with a four-legged family member should have a plan for what to do if their pet is lost and know the best methods to follow to get pets back safely.

Always supervise pets while they are outdoors. Pets can be stolen from backyards or jump fences.

Keep ID tags with current information on pets at all times. Make sure your pet is always wearing a tag with your current contact information. If your pet is found, current tags will get your pet home and speed up the process.

Microchip your pets. Collars can break and fall off, but microchips are embedded just under the skin. They are about the size of a grain of rice and are painless. Microchip contact information must also be kept current and pets with microchips should still wear ID tags.

Act fast and be vigilant about locating missing pets. Most animal control facilities and shelters honor a three to five day holding period for stray animals. After that time, an animal is typically put up for adoption or euthanized. Make sure to contact as many places as possible within the first three days.

Email or take a picture and description of the lost pet to all local animal shelters, police stations and veterinary clinics. These are the most common places a person will take a pet they found.

Have proof of ownership available. Most shelters require some form of proof of ownership before they will return a lost pet. Make sure photos of the animal, veterinary records and licensing information is easily accessible at all times.

Tips for finding Lost Pets

The following Tips are adapted from an article from Maddie's Fund. [See the full article.](#)

General Tips

Make your flyers neon and larger than a standard size piece of paper or people won't notice it.

For skittish dogs or indoor-only cats, consider using feeding stations with baited humane traps to catch the lost pet.

Consider using window chalk to write information about your lost pet on your car windows making a moving sign.

Searching for Lost Dogs

People tend to pull over to help a lost dog so you are usually trying to find the person who found the dog, and not necessarily the dog. Focus on ways to get your dog's information out to as many people as possible.

Dogs with a more fearful temperament may hide for several days before they allow themselves to be seen while a more outgoing dog will likely be picked up by a person right away. If your dog is shy, try searching local areas that make good hiding spots in addition to posting information publicly.

Consider trying to use an "intersection alert" where the pet owner and friends use four giant, florescent "Reward Lost Dog" poster to "market" the lost dog by standing on a street corner, holding the signs. This method is most effective for lost dogs, not cats.

Searching for Lost Cats

People are less likely to try to catch a lost cat than dog. Cats are also more likely to hide in fear if lost, so finding a lost cat involves searching every nook and cranny in the area surrounding your home. Cats don't often travel far on their own when they are lost.

Since cats hide, handing flyers and telling people that your cat is lost probably won't help. You will need to ask neighbors if they will allow you to search around their property for your cat.

Remember that "a panicked cat will hide in silence." Calling your cat's name or rattling a treat bag may not be enough to coax them out of a hiding place. You will have to get on your hands and knees and search. Even confident, outgoing cats will probably hide for several days.

The best advice for people searching for a lost pet is don't give up!