
Eight Steps You Should Take to Find Your Missing Companion Animal

1. File “missing” reports at veterinarians’ offices, the police department, and animal control. Follow up in person to make sure that a case of mistaken identity is not preventing a reunion with your companion animal.

2. Comb the neighborhood, paying special attention to spaces under porches, shrubs, and cars, as well as sheds, drain pipes, and other hiding places that might attract your frightened friend. Cover at least a 2-mile radius.

3. Ask delivery persons in your neighborhood if they have seen your animal running at large.

4. Post “missing” fliers, including a current photo that accurately portrays your companion animal—do not use one that is dated and misrepresents his or her appearance. At the top of your flier, write “REWARD,” and at the bottom list your home, work, and cell phone numbers and your e-mail address.

Keep the description vague or you may cause someone who has seen or rescued your animal to assume that he or she is not your lost friend. For example, many lost animals lose their collars—someone might think that your dog isn’t the one on the poster simply because he or she is no longer wearing a red collar.

Do not list the animal’s name or behavioral traits. Lost animals often do not respond to their names or may behave differently when they are frightened.

Don’t hint that you think your friend has been stolen, i.e., don’t say, “No questions asked,” as it may discourage a rescuer from calling, worried that he or she will be accused of theft.

Post your fliers at veterinary offices, animal control, pet and grooming shops, dog parks, schools, libraries, grocery stores—any place with a public bulletin board. Use sturdy tape or staples to place posters on utility poles at busy intersections (you may wish to check with the utilities department to find out if such postings are legal), and distribute notices to neighbors. You’ll need plenty of copies of your flier—plan to put up or distribute 200 posters the first day.

5. Visit your local animal shelter and animal control departments every day in person to see if your nonhuman friend has been turned in. Do not be satisfied with telephone inquiries. Shelters receive dozens of animals every day—and the staff person who answers your phone call may have missed seeing your friend come into the facility.

6. Place “lost” advertisements in all the local and weekly newspapers. Many publications will place such ads free of charge. Check the “found” ads every day. Register your animal with www.missingpet.net, a lost-and-found database that helps institutes conducting animal experiments ensure that they are not receiving lost or stolen animals.

7. If two weeks pass, update your flier.

A rain-soaked, tattered flier can look months old to someone who might think the animal on your flier is long gone and can’t be the same animal he or she has just rescued from busy traffic.

8. Don’t give up. It’s not uncommon for lost companion animals to be reunited with their guardians weeks or even months after becoming lost. It can be frustrating and exhausting, but your perseverance will increase your chances of finding your lost friend.

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