

Lost Pet Behavior



One of the tips that may help you find your lost pet is to understand your pet's behavior when they are lost.

Cats



Indoor only cats tend to hide in silence near their escape point; they will usually find the first safe place to hide and stay there to remain hidden from “predators.” Cats can stay hidden for many days, until they reach a “threshold factor” when thirst and hunger override their instinct to hide (10-14 days). During this time, cats will normally not respond to calls, even from their owners.

It's important to perform an aggressive physical search, looking under bushes, decks, in crawl spaces, sheds, garages—anywhere a cat can fit or become trapped. Use a flashlight to look for eye shine. For indoor only cats, your search radius should be approximately 3-5 houses (in a normal residential neighborhood). Ask for permission from your neighbors to search their yards, sheds, and garages thoroughly.

Indoor/outdoor cats that do not come home have usually been displaced by something, removing them from the territory they are familiar with. This could be a loud noise, construction, a run-in with a strange dog/animal, etc. The search area for an indoor/outdoor cat will be larger than that of an indoor-only cat, approximately a 10-house radius or just beyond their normal territory.

Lost Dog Behavior

Lost dogs generally travel further than cats. Dogs can go missing in a couple of ways:

1. Wandering, or following a scent.
2. Panicked, due to loud sounds or sights such as fireworks.

A dog who is wandering is relaxed and friendly dogs and may run right up to you once found. Dogs who wander away generally don't travel very far.

Panicked dogs can travel great distances, and will run in a blind panic from people, even from their owners. In the case of a panicked dog, their senses may be diminished and their sense of smell, which they use to identify you, may shut down. Therefore it is recommended that you do not call or chase a dog that is on the run, especially skittish dogs.



Use calming signals such as yawning or sitting on the ground, averting your eyes or acting uninterested in the dog. Bringing a crinkly bag of yummy, smelly treats such as warm hot dogs in a potato chip bag may be enticing enough to bring your dog close enough to catch.

The goal is to bring the dog to you rather than chase the dog. Once the dog shows interest, drop some food as if by accident, acting as if the dog is not there. If the dog thinks you are no threat, he may come close enough to take the dropped treats and for you to gently take hold of his collar. Try not to sit in a crouching or squatting manner, as that may resemble the predatory-like behavior of an animal about to attack.