

# ***Has your pet been stolen or is it missing?***

**Look everywhere** – around the house, in closed cupboards, closets, the garage, and the yard.

**Call your local animal shelter(s) immediately** to see if your animal was recently admitted.

Go door to door, and **talk with neighbors** in the area where your pet disappeared; it may provide leads to when the animal ran away and in which direction it headed.

**Walk, drive, or bicycle around the neighborhood**, calling the animal's name over and over. If your pet has been trapped in neighbor's yard or has been too injured to move, it may respond to your voice, so it's important to listen carefully. Pay special attention to sheds, abandoned buildings, and anywhere else your pet could be hiding. Perform this search several times throughout the day.

Create and **post signs** with a photo of your pet (be sure to post them legally!) that gives a description of the animal, the area in which he or she was lost, and a phone number or two. Be sure to place the fliers in your neighborhood and beyond, as well as in places where many people are likely to see them such as grocery stores, pet supply stores, veterinarians' offices, and animal shelters. If possible, offer a **reward** of at least \$300 to give people an incentive to return your pet.

Take **trips to the animal shelter** every day or every few days to look at all of the animals being held as strays. Trips are much more effective than phone calls, for animal descriptions are often very vague, and it's possible that the shelter employee on the phone may not match a particular animal to a lost report. Remember, you should visit the shelter for a minimum of ten days.

**Contact veterinary clinics**, including emergency veterinary hospitals. Your pet may have been injured and taken to a veterinarian or veterinary hospital for treatment.

**Contact local daily and weekly newspapers** to place a lost pet ad. Also, check the "found animal" section of local newspapers.

Contact **local radio and television stations**. Many air "lost and found pets" segments.

Ask **delivery people** who regularly travel through your neighborhood if they have seen your pet. Your mail carrier, water delivery person, gas company employee, security guard, or meter reader may have seen your pet. Ask them to be on the lookout for your animal as they pass through the area.

Obtain the names and numbers of **laboratory animal departments** of universities and hospitals in your area from your local town hall or from the Yellow Pages. Go to the labs and describe your animal to laboratory personnel. Post a photo of your animal in the laboratory. Also, post a photo in animal departments and in academic departments that include animal labs (i.e. most biological science and psychology departments).

File a **police report** with your local police department or sheriff's office. If you suspect that your animal has been stolen, report it to the police immediately. A police report will be useful for identification purposes when retrieving your pet and will prove helpful in court if a suspect is brought to trial. If the authorities are hesitant to prepare the report, remind them that pets by law are valuable "property" and their theft is either a felony or misdemeanor under all state laws. By law, the police must take action on your complaint. Be persistent.

If several animals in your neighborhood have turned up missing, **contact the police**. Provide them with as much detailed information as possible.

*Do not give up! Your pet is depending on you to do your best to try to find him or her. There are many instances of cats and dogs being found after many months. The person who responds immediately to a missing pet and expends significant energy in trying to find the animal stands a much greater chance of recovering him or her.*

Some of this information has been excerpted from *Stolen for Profit* by Judith Reitman.

### ➤ **Ensure that Your Pet Remains "Found"**

- Make sure that your pet always wears **identification** that includes his or her name and guardian's telephone number. Many people will ignore an animal that has no collar and tag, but if they see identification, they will be more likely to secure the animal and get in touch with his or her guardian.
- Consider having a veterinarian install a **microchip** in your cat or dog. The microchip is a back-up identification if the collar or tag breaks off and the animal is taken to a shelter, where the chip will be scanned and traced back to the owner. Veterinarians also **tattoo** animals as an identification measure. Knowing that an animal has identification on it when it disappears will also make the experience a little less unsettling for the guardian, though searching for the animal should be no less intense.
- Keep your pets indoors, especially when you are not at home.
- Do not leave animals unattended in your yard; it only takes a minute for thieves to steal your pet.
- Do not let your pets roam free in the neighborhood.
- Remember that indoor cats live longer, safer lives.
- Keep companion animals safely inside your home when you are expecting repair personnel or other guests.
- Know where your pets are at all times.
- Maintain up-to-date licenses on your pets.
- Keep recent photos and written descriptions of your companion animals on hand at all times.

- Spay and neuter your pets. Fixed animals are less likely to stray from home.
- Be aware of strangers in the neighborhood. Report anything unusual such as suspicious neighborhood activities or missing pets to the police and animal control.
- Padlock your gate; outdoor dogs should be kept safely behind a locked gate.
- Make sure that your animal is not visible from the street.
- Keep your pet on a leash whenever you go outside.
- Do not tie your pet outside a store to wait for you.
- Never leave an animal unattended in a car.