

Lost and Found – Getting Your Pets Home

Sheer shock and horror – the emotions that flood over you the moment you realize your pet is missing.

How long has it been? How did it happen? Where did they go? What do I do first?

Losing your pet is overwhelmingly emotional and chaotic. You want to act quickly, but you're not sure where to go first. I dropped my boyfriend off at the train one morning and returned home to find all three cats sneaking out the kitchen window.

One ran back in. One hunkered down under a tree and was easy to snatch up, but the third one – the skittish one – was just gone. I stood in the living room and cried because I wasn't sure where to begin. I wasn't sure if I could call in late to work to look for my cat, but I couldn't stomach the thought of leaving him to the mercy of the elements the whole day.

As I was frantically searching outside, I was lucky enough to run into a neighbor walking his dog. I gave him my cell phone number and asked him to call if he saw him. Ten minutes later, he called and had him cornered down the alley by a garage. It took some finessing, but we finally got him home safe and sound.

No matter how we try to keep our little ones safe, sometimes things happen. Here are a few tips should this happen to you. If your cat does get out there are a few things you can do that will help find him. The first few hours after the cat gets out it will most likely stay very close to the house. It will stay hidden and not usually move until dark.

A cat just does not run away like a dog; dogs will take off and run. A cat does not do that. Try looking around your house at night with a flashlight and shaking a bag of food or treats or snapping the ring on a can (they relate this to wet food). Some cats will come to the sounds quite readily. Check all possible hiding spots under bushes, in garages etc.

Talk to the neighborhood children; they see more animals outside than anyone else does. If this fails to retrieve the cat, there are other things to do. Put up fliers with a picture of the cat in your neighborhood, at the local vet offices, libraries, etc. If you offer a reward, don't say how much.

Check with your local animal control and rescues to see if any cat like yours has been brought in. It is best to go down in person and view the lost cats because they don't always have correct descriptions. Again take a picture along for a positive I.D.

If you are in a smaller suburb or town, check with your local police department. If they have picked up any stray cats there will be a record of it. Post an ad on Craig's List and check the lost pet section. Above all don't give up. Sometimes it can be months before there is a recovery.

For those whose cats are still at home, remember to spay or neuter. Spaying or neutering helps curb the urge to roam and find a mate. As an added safeguard, microchip your pets. The chip can be read by any vet or shelter and will be traced back to you. It is a small investment to ensure the safety of your beloved pet.

I've seen a lot of people in similar situations on my neighborhood Facebook page and realize your community is your greatest asset when a pet is lost. In addition to the above, search your social media networks to see if there are groups you can be a part of that might support a lost pet search. You may even be able to help find someone else's lost pet.

For example, I found the following websites and Facebook pages helpful:

- **Lost Cats of Wisconsin:** <https://www.facebook.com/lostcatwi>
- **Lost Dogs of Wisconsin:** <https://www.facebook.com/findfido>
- **Helping Lost Pets:** <http://www.helpinglostpets.com/>
- **Wisconsin Lost Pets:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wisconsin-Lost-Pets/122468241133045>
- **Missing Critters:** <http://www.missingcritters.com/home.php>
- **Tabby Tracker:** <http://www.tabbytracker.com/>
- **Helping Lost Pets:** <http://www.helpinglostpets.com>
- **Bay View Lost/Found Pets:**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/547918288621835/>
- **Bay View Town Hall:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/313811575355065/>
- **Bay View Milwaukee:** <https://www.facebook.com/bay.v.milwaukee?fref=ts>
- **Lost and Found Pets of Milwaukee:**
<https://www.facebook.com/LostFoundPetsMilwaukeeWI/?fref=ts>

If you are unable to find similar options in your area, this may be an opportunity for you to launch a page or group to help monitor your neighborhood. With a strong community connection, we will help keep our fur babies safe and in their homes.