

What to do When You Find a Lost Pet

Courtesy of <http://www.h4ha.org>

You probably have a good idea what to do if you've lost your pet. Check with the shelters. Put up posters. Place an ad in the "lost and found" classifieds. But do you know what to do if you find someone else's lost pet? Most people don't have a clue. Take some time to think about it. Your preparedness and quick, caring action can save an animal's life.

Don't assume a stray dog or cat has been abandoned. There is a good chance that the scruffy, unkempt animal on your doorstep is lost and that a frantic family is desperately searching for him.

Immediately

- If an animal is wandering the streets, take him into safety (without putting yourself in danger). It just takes a minute for a cat or dog to be run over by a car.
- Look for tags. If the animal has a tag with his owner's phone number, make the call for the happy reunion. A dog with a license quickly can be traced by your county's animal control agency. These lucky animals have a ticket home.

Notify the Authorities

- Report the lost pet to your county's animal control agency or humane shelter. If you take the animal to your county shelter, his chances of finding his owner or a great new home are better than you might think.
- If you would like to keep the animal, ask to adopt him when you take in line to have him as your permanent companion if the owner isn't located. Some shelters allow you to be a back-up adopter, so you can save the animal if no one else adopts him.
- Many shelters are overcrowded, if you wish and are able to foster the animal until his owner is found, tell them that you wish to do this. Most agencies may be agreeable to this.

Alternative Steps

- If you don't turn the animal over to a shelter, there are some things that you must do. The law requires you to file a report with your local animal control agency, so information about the pet you found is available for his owners. You must also place "found" ads for at least two weeks in a local newspaper. The animal's owner can claim him from you any time in the next six months.
- When placing a notice, leave out a pertinent piece of information about the pet. This will be used to help properly identify the owner. Another thing that you may ask a person identifying themselves as the owner is the name and telephone number of the animal's veterinarian. Make the call and verify this before turning over the animal. There are lots of unscrupulous people out there who search the classifieds for animals to be sold to laboratories for research. Don't let this animal fall into their grasp.
- There are other steps you should take to find the animal's rightful owner.
 - Put up posters with the animal's photo throughout the neighborhood, as well as at local grocery stores, pet stores and veterinary offices.
 - Take the pet to a shelter or veterinarian to scan for microchip identification.
 - Check the "lost" ads in the paper every day.
 - Ask people in the neighborhood, including mail carriers, meter readers, trash collectors and schoolchildren if they know who owns the animal.
 - Look for posters and fliers that may be describing your "found" pet.
 - Submit a listing to Hugs for Homeless Animals' Worldwide Lost and Found Pets [<http://www.h4ha.org/lostfound>]

The Bottom Line

A lost, frightened animal is depending on you. Do for this creature what you would want someone to do for your pet.

Maine Coon Adoptions