

## Half of All Missing Dogs Were Found When Their Owners Did This

By doing this one thing, 49% of dog owners in a survey found their missing pups. If that doesn't work, here are ten simple steps to help you bring home your pet without going insane from worry. Skip the panic and be proactive!

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Nearly 20% of pets go missing after being scared by loud noises such as fireworks and thunderstorms
- There are several steps you should take if your pet goes missing, and one of the first is to make up fliers with your pet's picture and your phone number
- According to one survey, about half of missing dogs and a third of missing cats were found by owners searching their neighborhoods
- Some pets, especially dogs, don't run off, but are stolen. One thing you can do to keep your pet safe from thieves is to never leave him outside when you're not home

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According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), nearly 1 in 5 pets goes missing after being scared by loud noises such as fireworks and thunderstorms.<sup>1</sup>

The good news is that according to estimates, over 90% of lost dogs and 75% of lost kitties eventually find their way home. But if you've ever had a pet go missing, you know how incredibly upsetting it can be for every member of the family.

### 10 Steps to Take If Your Pet Goes Missing

1. Make up fliers with your dog's picture, your phone number, and information about a reward for return if you're able to offer one. Give a good enough description of your pet so that he can be recognized, but hold back at least one identifying characteristic that you can use to verify whether a person responding to the flier actually has your dog.
2. Post your fliers in the area where your dog was last seen, in grocery stores, community centers, vet offices, animal shelters, mailbox clusters – anywhere the flier has a chance to be noticed by lots of people in your neighborhood or community.
3. Visit your local animal shelters, humane society, and rescue organizations. File a lost pet report with every shelter and animal control office within a 60-mile radius of your home and visit the nearest shelters daily, or as often as possible.

4. Get the word out to all the veterinary clinics in your area. Many people who find lost pets take them to their own vet's office or another clinic close to where the animal was found.
5. Walk and drive through your neighborhood and the area where your pet was last seen as often as you can, and recruit friends and family to do the same. While you're out, talk to neighbors and passersby and let them know you are desperate to find your pet. Make sure to take plenty of fliers with you and pass them out.
6. Leave some of your pet's favorite food and fresh water outside your home in case she finds her way back on her own. Consider placing the bowls in a humane trap that will hold your pet until you can recover her.
7. Place ads in local newspapers and online at sites such as Missing Pet Network, **Petfinder**, FindFido.com, Center for Lost Pets, and **Craigslist**. If you receive a call from someone who says he has your pet, be cautious. Have the caller describe your pet in enough detail that you can be relatively sure it is your dog he has. You can also ask the caller to give you the information on the ID tag.
8. Do online searches for animals fitting your pet's description. It's possible someone has your dog or cat and is trying to sell him.
9. Don't give up your search too quickly and be aggressive. Dogs and cats gone for months have been returned to their owners.
10. Practice self-care. It's very easy when a pet is missing to lose sleep, skip meals, leave normal daily routines behind, and swing from stressed out to exhausted and back again. To the best of your ability, try to take care of yourself while you search for your pet. Eat healthy, meditate, and try to get some exercise each day.

## A Few Facts About Recovered Pets

A few years ago, the ASPCA surveyed 1,000 pet owners to learn how lost pets are most often located and returned home.<sup>2</sup>

According to the survey results, the most important steps in finding a lost pet were:

- Searching immediately
- Searching the local area and neighborhood visually, along with putting up fliers and using Internet resources
- Checking local shelters from the first day the pet goes missing

Of the pet owners surveyed, 15% had lost a cat or dog in the previous 5 years. Eighty-five percent of those pets were recovered – 74% of lost cats, and 93% of lost dogs. Of the recovered dogs ...

- 49% were found by owners searching their neighborhoods
- 15% were found thanks to the presence of either an ID tag or microchip
- 6% were found at a shelter

Of the recovered kitties ...

- 59% returned home on their own
- 30% were found by owners searching their neighborhoods
- 2% were found at a shelter

## An Ounce of Prevention ...

The fastest way to locate a lost pet is to use a GPS tracker during high-risk events, such as fireworks and backyard parties or barbeques. There are several options to choose from, including the Pod tracker, Pawtrack for cats, and Loc8tor for pets. These collars allow you to easily track your pet from your computer, so the instant you realize your dog or cat is gone, you are able to identify where they are in your neighborhood.

## Some Pets Aren't Lost ... They're Stolen

Dogs are the most common targets, and they're stolen for a variety of reasons. Some are taken to give as gifts, some become the thief's personal pet, and others are sold for quick cash, often over the Internet.

Puppies, toy breeds, and purebreds that look expensive or unusual are most often taken. Among the most stolen breeds are Yorkshire Terriers, Poodles, Pomeranians, Shih Tzus, Bulldogs, and Corgis. Steps to keep your dog safe from thieves:

- If your dog is ever in the backyard alone, make sure your fence is secure and your gate is not only closed, but also locked.
- Never leave your dog outside while you're away from home.
- Never allow your pet to roam free around the neighborhood.
- Don't leave your pet tied up outside unsupervised in your yard, at the local coffee shop, or anywhere else. It takes only seconds for a thief to untie or cut your pup's leash and walk away with her.
- Don't leave your dog in an unlocked parked car, or one with the windows down far enough that the dog can be removed through a window.
- Make sure your pet is wearing a collar with a current ID tag at all times. Rather than imprinting the dog's name on the tag, put 'Reward for Return' instead, along with at least one current phone number. (It's better if a thief can't call your dog by name.) My pets' tags say 'REWARD IF FOUND, NEEDS MEDICATION' with my phone number on them.
- Keep recent photos of your pet on hand. They should show her at different angles, her coat color, her face in close-up, and any unusual physical characteristics she has. Store photos with your proof of ownership paperwork like adoption papers, bill of sale, etc.

## Sources and References

[dvm360 August 6, 2014](#)

<sup>1</sup> [ASPCA.org](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Animals 2012, 2, 301-315](#)

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