

FINDING YOUR LOST CAT

Call Rescue Immediately If Your Cat Gets Out!

Oh no! You kitty got outside and you can't find her. Don't despair. There are some constructive steps you can take to help her get home again.

FIRST – take action immediately; don't wait for a few days to see if she will find her way home. Cats do not "run away" or "stray." They investigate new places and find themselves trapped, they get lost if driven away from their territory, they are spirited off by circumstances beyond their control, they become ill or injured and creep away to a quiet dark place. Cats rarely voluntarily leave their home, even if badly treated. It is imperative when a cat turns up missing to begin an aggressive search immediately. Your cat's life could depend on it.

SEARCH HOUSE & IMMEDIATE AREA ---

Cats are excellent hidiers. Look first in your immediate area including checking the house carefully unless someone saw your cat get out. Look in every nook and cranny. Don't assume that your cat would never crawl into some tiny space or that they can't possibly fit (the will and do!). The more scared they are the deeper they will hide. Use a powerful flashlight even in the daytime.



Inside the home, check all appliances – under, behind and inside - washing machines, clothes dryers, stoves, refrigerators, dishwashers and water heaters. Cats LOVE boxes so check them all. Move everything from under beds, in closets, bookcases, shelves, drawers, cabinets...

Listen for sounds of distress. Cats explore weird spaces and can be attracted to dark, normally inaccessible places and even to vertical spaces. That's why you look behind and under appliances and in spaces you just don't think they could possibly fit. If you have been remodeling or making changes, had doors open to places like the attic, check these spaces remember cats are great explorers.

Thoroughly check your own yards-front, back and sides in case the cat has been injured or gotten stuck somewhere. Look under bushes, under cars, crawl spaces under the house, inside any shed or garage, drain pipes, culvert pipes... Don't forget to look up too – cats do climb so check roofs, overhangs, openings to attics, trees, gutters...

WALK AROUND – Once you have thoroughly searched your own area, start checking with the neighbors. Knock on doors and if home ask to look in their yards, garages, basements, etc. I had a cat that every time he got out would hide in my neighbor's garage. That was the first place I looked.

Start walking if you can while it is daylight but go out again after dark when it's quiet in your neighborhood. Do walk in the daytime to talk to people that wouldn't be out at night.

If you can, enlist a friend to walk with you but be sure he/she is the quiet type. Carry a powerful flashlight at all times you will need it to look under cars and into hiding places.

Talk to everybody you meet as you hand out the flyers, knock on doors. People getting into cars, walking by, the postman, everyone! Kids are great at finding pets so be sure to enlist the neighborhood children.

Ask not only if they have seen your cat but also if they heard or saw anything unusual in the neighborhood. Take a note pad with you so you can write down what they tell you. Sometimes utility workers can have manholes open or animal services might have been in the area picking up strays.

Sometimes cats climb into moving vans or parked cars and are not found immediately. Was such a vehicle in your area at the time of disappearance?

Carry something that smells like your cat and you and some good smelly cat tuna (or whatever her favorite flavor of wet food).

Call your cat's name and she might come out from hiding. Make any other noise that your cat is familiar with. It's also important to stop periodically, be quiet, and listen for your cat to make a noise in reply.

I found a kitty that got out in a totally strange neighborhood the night before. He was across the street and I just walked around after it was dark and quiet, calling his name and carrying some food he liked. After a little bit I heard him answer me from under a car. It still took over 2 hrs to get him to come out from hiding. Be patient.

When out looking, carry your cell phone, so you can call someone if you need help without leaving where your cat is once you spot her. If you do pick her up,

expect her to bolt, hold her firmly by the scruff at the back of the neck while supporting her with other arm. Best to wait until someone can come back with a carrier or carry a soft carrier with you IF your cat is not afraid of a carrier.



SMELLS – Remember cat’s sense of smell is 3000 times ours so put some things outside that smell like you and your cat. Cats bedding, worn t-shirts and socks, favorite wet and dry food, even used litter.

FLYER -- One of the best things you can do is make a flyer and put it into EVERYONE’s mailbox in a several block radius of your home. Put a good description on the flyer and photo and the note “**PLEASE hold on to this flyer in case you see my kitty in the next few weeks or months**”. Offer a reward (don’t state the amount). Include general address where lost (not exact home address), contact phone numbers and e-mail address.

If you make it in color even the better. People LOOK at color flyers more often than black and white ones, even ½ page size. Post it in businesses like laundymats, pet stores, video stores, cleaners, vets offices but again the most important ones will be in everyone’s mailbox for several blocks from where your cat disappeared. I know of a couple that got their cat back after 3 months due to flyer in a mailbox.

More cats are reunited with their guardians because



of flyers than anything else, so do one right away and don’t be embarrassed to put it everywhere.

LOCAL VETERINARIAN OFFICES – Call ALL of the local veterinarian offices during the day and after 6pm call the emergency vet clinics too. Send them all flyers.

Ask if any cat even similar in description to your cat was brought to their offices for treatment. If it even remotely resembles your cat, visit the office in person or get more details as to where the animal is now. Descriptions rarely match, ages are often guessed wrong so you must go see the cat to be sure.

ASK FOR HELP – Don’t be embarrassed to contact any Cat Rescue near you and ask for help. Rescue has a network throughout Southern California. We can also post on the Internet through different animal rescue related groups/lists.

If you are computer savvy, go on line and look for various websites that post lost animals. Even if you hate computers use the local free services of the newspapers, and weekly sale periodicals to describe you missing kitty. **Offer a reward.** Check the lost and found sections of all newspapers.

VISIT SHELTERS – Today many city and county shelters have websites. Call and get the web address or do a search on line in a search engine like Goggle.

Most city and County Shelters have a website with animal photos of cats coming into shelter. They guess-timate the age and can be way off so just look at the photos.

Visit all the shelters near you, ask to see ALL of the cats, many are not in public view if considered fractious (many of these are friendly scared cats) or sick. Leave flyers; do NOT expect to get a call from the shelter if a cat that looks like yours comes in, EVEN if they say they will call. You have to go back every 3 days (stray cats are held for 4 days in California so to be safe go every 3 days). If you are outside of California, check the local shelter guidelines.

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN – It’s very sad but cats do get killed on streets. If you want to find out if this happened to your cat you must check with the correct state or city department. The road crews for your local and state department of transportation (DOT)

usually pick up dead animals from the roadside and city streets. In some cases Animal Control does this as well. You have to call around and find out which agencies do this service in your area. Be sure to find them all. This is a sad, sad task & some people don't want to know but others do. Some say they have to check every possibility or it haunts them not knowing. For this reason we included this information.

KEEP LOOKING – Don't give up in the first 2 weeks, cats have been reunited after being gone for months. Once your kitty is home pick up any flyers you posted in public places or businesses and give your cat a great big hug!!.

WORDS OF CAUTION -- It's sad but true, some people prey upon others misfortune

NEVER respond to a "found" pet contact alone. Take a friend or two along with you. Arrange to meet in a public place.

NEVER invite the person to your home unless you happen to know them well.

Beware of money scams. A common one is a person calls you claiming to be a truck driver. He says he picked up your cat and is out of the city now. He heard about your lost cat and says he will return your cat if you will pay to ship her home. This person does not have your cat; he is only trying to take your money. If you want to be sure ask him to take a photo and mail it to you (give a work address or P.O. Box).

Never agree to give or mail money to anyone without having your cat in your arms. Anyone asking you to do this is trying to steal from you.

Don't wander around looking for your pet alone, either during the day or at night. Always bring a friend or relative. This is especially important in unfamiliar neighborhoods.

WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR CAT

ALWAYS TRANSPORT YOUR CAT IN A CAT CARRIER, not a box but a plastic or soft-sided carrier. I cringe every time someone says to me, "my cat hates to go in a carrier so I just carry her in my arms." There are a million things that can scare your cat and it can bolt from your arms, dash into traffic or go under a fence and hide in a totally strange place. Your cat will NOT



come to you when it is frightened in a strange place, with strange smells and traffic noise around, it will hide. Also if your car breaks down or you are in a car accident you can't leave your cat in the vehicle.

So please, NEVER take your cat to the vet or anywhere else unless it is secured in a sturdy carrier or on a leash. The boxes you buy at vets and pet stores are for one-time emergency trips. I had a cat break out of one in my car in less than 5 minutes and this was a friendly cat! In emergency situations use a pillowcase.

ALWAYS KEEP A COLLAR ON YOUR INDOOR CAT with a current phone numbers. I also add "Medical Covered" so someone will not hesitate to take my cat to the vet if injured.

Use only a safety collar, one that stretches or breaks away so cat can get loose if tangled in something. DO NOT put a collar on a kitten; they do not weigh enough to make the collar break away.



MICROCHIP YOUR CAT or if already microchipped be sure to keep the database current, after your cat is missing is not the time to think about updating it. There are several major microchipping companies in the US that offer 24/7 coverage. Use the one most common in your area. Some of them are AVID, HomeAgain, 24-PetWatch... You can find out more about microchipping from your local animal shelters, humane societies, websites, rescue groups and vets.

TAKE SOME GOOD, DETAILED PHOTOS of your cat and keep them some place handy. Make them close-ups similar to what you would take of an object you are insuring. This is insurance for your cat. Take the head and the body and any interesting marks. For instance I once knew a cat with a perfect heart under her chin so her owner had a photo of that heart!

TRAIN YOUR CAT TO COME --This may sound crazy but train your cat to come to an "Acme Dog Whistle". These are whistles that animals can hear a lot further than we can. They have a high pitch that is out of our hearing range. To train your cat, blow the whistle each time before you feed her or give her a treat. She will then be more likely to come to you or answer you if she hears the whistle when lost.

There are several articles, books and products for sale on the internet for training cats.

