

Finding a Lost Cat

Finding a lost cat takes time, patience, perseverance and planning, all of which can be frustrating to a guardian who just wants to find their cat ... NOW!!!!

Keep in mind that when your cat is lost, he is probably just in hiding and may be closer than you think! When a cat is in unfamiliar territory, he goes into hiding because he is afraid. Cats generally do not meow when they're lost, because meowing only gives away their location to predators.

How do I search for my lost cat?

Hopefully, your cat is wearing a collar with some kind of tags. This can help to identify your cat as an owned cat rather than a stray or feral cat. Additionally, this can help people identify your cat if you've posted flyers and informed neighbors that your cat is missing.

You should search outside your home EVERY day, especially early in the morning and in the evening when cats are most active. Also, try to look at the time you normally feed your cat. You can shake kitty's favorite bag of treats or leave a litter box with soiled litter near your door so he can smell his scent.

Post brightly colored flyers throughout your neighborhood. Flyers should show the cat's picture, location where last seen, and your phone number. Don't be afraid to leave some of them at your local animal shelter. Ask nearby businesses if you can leave some with them, as well. And ask your postal worker; remember, he/she is in your neighborhood every day and may have seen the cat.

Check your local animal shelter on a regular basis. Also check with local rescue groups, humane societies, and feral cat organizations in your area (see local help on back).

Most importantly, remember to physically search for your cat. And don't be afraid to get dirty looking for your cat. You will need to get down and crawl under in, through and under stuff while searching for your lost cat. Don't forget to search in garages, storage sheds, and neighbors' yards.

Don't forget to rent humane traps and place them strategically around your home. If you can't rent these from your local animal shelter, the local animal shelter will probably be able to help point you in the right direction.

Behaviors that influence how a cat reacts when lost

Keep in mind that temperament influences action. Below are some tips for searching for your cat based on personality type.

Careless Cats are the aloof cats that prefer to watch strangers from a distance. When lost, they may hide initially, but usually break cover to come to the door, meow, or possibly travel. To find these cats, interview neighbors, search hiding places, and search nearby yards. Humane traps can also be a useful tool when searching for these types of cats.

Timid Cats fear everything that is new or unfamiliar. These are the types of cats your friends don't believe you have. When lost, they hide in absolute silence. They stay in the same spot, immobilized with fear. These types of cats are often absorbed into feral cat colonies. A way of getting these cats home is to humanely trap them. So be sure to check with feral cat feeders, and get help from experienced feral cat trappers.

Cautious Cats have occasional bouts of shyness, even though they generally enjoy people. These cats may bolt when a stranger comes to the door, but may also come out to cautiously explore. When lost, these cats immediately hide in fear. If not scared off, they usually return to the place they escaped from or meow when their guardian calls. This usually happens within the first few days to about 2 weeks (when they finally get hungry). Look for these cats in neighbors yards and set humane traps for them.

Curious/Clown Cats are outgoing cats that get into trouble, run to meet anyone at the door, and are not easily frightened. When lost, they may hide initially, but are likely to travel. Search strategies should include placing florescent posters within a 5 block radius of home, search all possible hiding places thoroughly, and don't assume the cat will come when called.

Lost cat prevention

Below is a list of things you can do to help prevent losing your cat.

- Make sure your cat is microchipped.
- Make sure your cat always wears a collar, even if your cat is an indoor-only cat.
- Keep your cat indoors.
- DON'T GIVE UP HOPE!

Local help

Below is a list of local resources in the Mercer County, NJ area. Other local rescue groups can be found when you Google "your town" animal shelter.

To rent a humane trap (refundable deposit):
 EASEL Animal Rescue League609-883-0540
 Ewing Animal Shelter.....609-771-8076
 Trenton Animal Shelter609-989-3254
 Trenton Cats.....TrentonCats@gmail.com
 Hamilton Animal Shelter.....609-890-3550

Additional resources (click on links for more info)

- Pet Rescue:
<http://www.petrescue.com/petlibrary/pet-rescue/how-to-find-a-lost-cat-or-dog>
- Missing Pet Partnership:
<http://www.missingpetpartnership.org/index.php>
- Missing Pet Network:
<http://www.missingpet.net>
- General Search Tips:
<http://www.sonic.net/~pauline/search.html>
- Pets 911:
<http://www.pets911.com>