

Have you lost your pet?

First, take a long deep breath and try not to panic. It may feel like the end of the world, but the good news is that your pet most likely will be found. The key is for you to make a plan and stay calm.

It's a good idea to contact someone you know for help during this time. Your friends and family can provide support and also help you search a greater area for your pet.

1. Begin by searching your home (you may need a torch)

Start by calling your pet while exploring outside. Make sure you look everywhere including:

- (tick) inside the house
 under the house
 down the side of the house
 in the roof (remember a tile may have slipped providing an opening)
 under bushes
 in sheds

Make a list of other places in and around your home where your pet could be.

Remember:

- * Animals tend to find a quiet place to recover if they have been hurt.
- * Don't expect your pet to call out for you, but do make sure you stop and listen, just in case your pet is trying to get to you. Your pet maybe stuck somewhere.
- * If you have a smaller pet on acreages that enjoys chasing rabbits, remember to check rabbit and fox holes.

2. Start looking in surrounding areas.

Do a door knock of all the houses in your area and surrounding areas. Chances are someone has seen your pet in the surrounding areas of your home. Work strategically checking off all the areas you have covered. Remember if you have a male who is not spayed, he may have traveled some distance to find a female dog (bitch) in season.

Make sure you search sheds, garages, buildings, reserves, parks, schoolyards, rivers, creeks, building works in the area. Don't forget to involve family and friends as you can cover more ground.

Note:

If you have lost a dog, make sure you explore the areas where you take him or her regularly.

Cats often go into other people's houses via windows or cat flaps and get stuck when the owners go away (for example on holidays). If it looks like the house is vacated, ask at adjoining houses if they have heard your cat. They may also know when the owners of the vacated house are likely to return.

3. Create a flyer or poster with information about your pet, including a recent photo.

Place notices in well-known positions around the local area. These may include veterinary offices, pet shops, hairdresser and beauty shops, grocery stores, community bulletin boards, churches, pizza shops, laundromats, convenience stores, near schools, and on school bulletin boards. You may also like to place this flyer in letter boxes around your area and surrounding areas.

Information to include on your poster or flyer:

- A contact name and number.
- When and where your pet went missing from.
- A detailed description of your pet.
- What name your pet answers to.
- A photograph (a colour photograph if possible).
- A reward (not stating the amount)

4. Contact a range of organisations to enquire whether your pet has been found.

Cover as large an area as possible, in case your pet has been picked up by car and taken to an organisation or animal shelter in another suburb or town (see below for a list of animal shelters).

When reporting your lost pet make sure you:

- Give a detailed description of your pet including any identifiable marks and characteristics.
- Describe any identification they were wearing or if they have been micro chipped.
- Report the area your pet went missing from.
- Report any medical conditions your pet may have.
- Leave your name and contact number
- Don't forget any other information that you feel is useful to locate your pet.

You may like to let the organisation know what type of temperament your pet has in case they need to handle him or her, for example, shy, outgoing, etc.

It is strongly recommended that you personally visit local animal shelters and pounds as identifying an animal over the phone can be difficult.

Don't rely on contacting the pound or shelter just once as it may be a number of days before the animal arrives in the pound. (Someone may take the animal home for a few days and then decide to contact the council).

We can stress how important it is to visit animal shelters and pounds. For example, recently, a gentleman came into our shelter looking for his Staffy. We told him we didn't

have any. We told him to go out to the rows for peace of mind. He went out and came back into the office upset. We did indeed have his dog. It was a Jack Russell with bowed Staffy legs. This has happened many times but when it is over the phone, it's more difficult. Some people think they have a pure breed but it is crossed.

Even if your pet was wearing identification, don't assume that the council or animal shelter will notify you.

This is because the collar and tag may have become lost, or the pound or shelter may not have scanned the animal for a microchip. Microchips can also be difficult to find.

When visiting local animal shelters and pounds make sure you are prepared by bringing:

- dog or cat carrier
- registration papers
- vaccination certificates
- photo identification (for you)
- photos etc (of your pet)

The main organisations to contact:

- Your local council who may put you onto another organisation if they do not operate their own pound.
- Animal Shelters (see list below).
- Contact your local veterinarians. Refer to the yellow pages and contact the ones you know.

Other organisations to contact

You may also like to place an ad in your local papers under the lost and found sections. Some local radio stations will make announcements regarding lost pets. Search for these radio stations in the yellow pages. An extensive list of Victorian radio stations is listed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Australian_radio_stations#Victoria .

Don't forget to check all newspapers' 'Found' section every day.

Animal shelters

Lost Dogs' Home, 2 Gracie St North Melbourne 9329 2755.

RSPCA, East Burwood; 9224 2222.

Lort Smith Animal Hospital, North Melbourne; 9328 3021 or 9328 3128.

Save-a-dog scheme inc, 293 Tooronga rd Malvern; 9885 1188 Mobile: 0418 389 810.

Australian Animal Protection Society, Keysborough; 9798 8044 or 9798 8415.

Blue Cross Animal Society, Wonga Park 9722 1265.

Victorian Animal Aid Trust, Kilsyth 9725 5608 or 9725 3596.

Peninsula Animal Aid (RSPCA) Pearcedale; 5978 6706 or 5978 6811.

Geelong Animal Welfare Society Moolap; 5248 2091.

Council Pounds

Be sure to call your council and visit the pound as soon as possible. Your council will advise you of which pounds to check. Your council may also have an online listing of the animals that have recently been impounded.

Online lost and found notice boards where people can register their lost pets:

www.dogs4sale.com.au

www.petlink.com.au

www.lostdogs.com.au

www.dogsites.com.au

Other organisations

Missing Animals Bureau, Ashburton; 9885 3603.

Missing Pets Line, Werribee; 9748 5350.

Local Police.

VicRoads Road Patrol Depots; phone 9854 2666 to obtain number for local depots.

As previously mentioned, you may need to make repeat visits to these organisations.

When you find your pet, it's a good idea to collect up your old posters. You may like to thank everyone who helped you. You may also like to send us an email to let us know you have been reunited with your pet trea@optusnet.com.au Thank you.