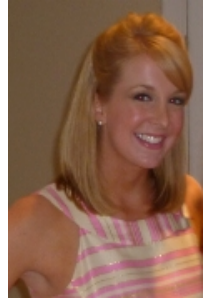


What to Do When You Find a Lost Pet



by
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If you're anything like me, you don't let a lost pet continue on their way. I always stop and help the animal, since as a pet owner myself I would hope someone would do the same for my pet if they ever got lost.

Helping a stray animal can be quite a responsibility though, and with local Animal Control budgets being strained and their hours being restricted, you can't always assume your only step is going to be to call them. So I've compiled a few important steps and information for the next time you come across a lost pet.

Step 1 – Look for an ID tag or collar with the pet's information

If you're lucky, the animal's name, address and phone number should be on an ID tag or embroidered into their collar. If you're even luckier, one phone call should be all it takes to arrange to get the lost pet back home. If the owner is not answering, and you feel it is safe to do so, you could try driving the animal to the address listed.

Step 2 – Call Animal Control

Unfortunately, the information on these tags is not always the most up-to-date. Sometimes there is no identification on their animal whatsoever! If this is the case and you are unable to reach the owner by phone or at the listed address, try calling your local Animal Control department to ask them to come retrieve the animal. They will keep the animal safe until the owner can claim their pet.



Calling Animal Control does NOT put the animal at risk for being put down. Your local Animal Control agents work to ensure the safety and happiness of their constituents, both human and furry (and slimy). In the case of New Bedford, for instance, our Animal Control department has contracted Forever Paws Animal Shelter to house and care for lost and abandoned pets. Any animal that is collected by our Animal Control agents are brought to this shelter where they will be well-cared for until claimed by their owner. Should the animal not be claimed as anyone's missing pet, they will be put up for adoption.

The Animal Control department for New Bedford can be reached at (508) 991-6366.

Step 3 – Call Local Police Department Dispatch

If you are unsuccessful in reaching your local Animal Control department, you can try contacting your police dispatch line. They are *sometimes* able to radio an Animal Control agent, even during off-hours.

This is especially helpful if you are unable to personally care for the pet until you find its owner. I would also warn that anyone with pets should think twice about bringing an unfamiliar animal into their home, even if just until you

locate the owner. You can never be sure about the temperament of a lost animal, nor their health history, and you do not want to risk your own pet's or families' safety if you can help it.

There have been occasions where I have kept lost dogs in my backyard until we found the owner, but I kept my own pets safely inside our home.

The Police Dispatch line for New Bedford can be reached by calling (508) 991-6350.

Step 4 – Check with Neighbors

Even if you are not familiar with a lost pet you come across, your neighbors might be.

If you follow the New Bedford Guide or the Daily Dog Blog's Facebook page, you will have seen that my husband recently found two lost labs wandering the streets in Lakeville. After asking some residents of that area whether they recognized the dogs, he was able to determine where he believed the lost dogs came from. He placed a phone call to the residence and a few hours later the pups were home safe and sound.

Step 5 – Call Area Animal Control Agencies and Shelters

Chances are that if Fido is out running around and his owners are aware that he's gone missing, they've called Animal Control agencies and shelters around them to report their pet missing. Calling these resources might amp up your chances for reuniting



Fido with his owners.

Call and describe the animal you've found to the full extent and leave your name and phone number. If the owners call to report their pet missing, they'll know how to contact you.

Step 6 – Utilize Social Media

If you've still not been successful in reuniting the lost pet with their owner, do not underestimate the power of social media! Between Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and countless other platforms, you can spread the word, and *photos*, of the pet you've found.

One such agency focuses on this – Granite State Dog Recovery. Between their Facebook page and website, this organization aims to reunite lost dogs with their families by working in partnership with shelters, rescues and Animal Control agents. This community outreach effort covers all of New England and is run totally by volunteers and there is no charge for their service. By using their "Report a Found Dog" tool, you can assist Granite State State Recovery in creating custom "Found Dog" flyers that they will spread via their Facebook page. And with over 18,000 fans, there are a lot of eyes that will be seeing and sharing your information.

GraniteState Dog Recovery can be found here:
<http://www.facebook.com/granitestatedogrecovery>.

And don't forget to reach out to other area organizations! The New Bedford Guide's Facebook page is another great place to post found pet information, as is the Daily Dog Blog's. You'll be amazed at how many people will view and share the information – *quickly!*

By following these tips, you should be able to ensure a happy ending for the lost pet you've saved. Please don't ever look the other way when you see a wandering animal for fear that you just don't have the time or energy to try and help them.

Remember, if *your* pet were ever lost, you'd hope caring people would help reunite you too!

Do you know of any additional resources or have tips that you'd like to share for reuniting a lost animal with its owner? Share them in the comment section below!

Elizabeth Cincotta is one of the co-founders of the Daily Dog Blog. Follow their Facebook page for updates. Leave her a comment here or contact her at Beth@dailydogblog.org.