

# LOST CAT TIPS:

Indoor only cats will be close. Your chances of finding them in the first few days are very good. Please note, they are very scared. Please don't wait for them to come home. You need to actively search for them. They go close, low and dark. This is why many run for the storm drains which many cats use as a sort of highway. Indoor/outdoor cats are more comfortable being outside. The following tips apply to them but they often go farther. Try to find out where local feral colonies are and if there is anyone near you that is feeding stray cats. Many people think cats hate each other and that's simply not true. They want to be with their own kind but there is a hierarchy that must be established and this is why cats fight. They will establish their place and become a part of the colony eventually and this is how these colonies are formed. Most are cats who were pets who got lost or just never came home. TNR groups are very good at picking out which cats are friendly ( these are usually lost pets ) and which are feral ( born into the colony ) reach out to them and alert them to keep an eye out for your lost baby. I do have to add this one thing here. DO NOT put out your cats litterbox and I don't care who tells you to do it. Here is the actual science behind this. Cats instinctively bury their business for the sole purpose of HIDING their scent from other cats and predators. Putting their box out will broadcast their scent to other cats and predators, both of which will keep your cat in hiding even longer. Lost animals respond to their owner's scent or companion animal's scents and of course food smells. Please note, indoor cats can stay hidden sometimes for weeks until hunger pushes them to move, finally. Don't give up !!

Here is a list of tips to get you started.

- 1- Make a lost report with local animal control and your shelter. Alert microchip company if applicable.
- 2- Put out any item of unwashed clothing of yours, food/water, near the door where your cat got out. They like to return the way they got out. If you are comfortable doing so, leave that door open a crack. You can also do this set up in your garage and leave the door up just a bit, especially overnight.
- 3- Do a quick search, remember, low and dark. Cats can fit in a hole the size of your fist. Look under everything, sheds, bushes, decks, outdoor furniture, etc. They are usually within five houses of home so ask your neighbors if you can look in their yards too. If you have any plumber friends, a snake camera is really helpful for this. Have a high value food with you such as tuna to coax your cat out. It's also really helpful to set an alarm and go out after dark with a flashlight and look under everything again but look for that bright green eyeshine. It's a very good idea to let your neighbors know you will be doing this and what time you plan on it. Also, if you think your cat may be in the storm drains, put a piece of tuna in the corners of the one closest to your home and place a camera on it if possible.
- 4- post to social media and I'll tell you how and why in a moment. Post on any community pages, lost and found pages, yard sale pages that will allow. Post on the nextdoor app.

\*\* to create facebook post. Go to YOUR PERSONAL page and create your post. Include address, city and state ( remember, this will be shared everywhere and people may not know your neighborhood name ) along with any phone numbers where people can reach you for sightings. Include a picture of your pet and ask people to click on the picture to comment on the original post and not the shares. Now share this post to the pages mentioned and of course your friends. This creates one main post that can be shared but all the information is kept in one place and can be easily found by you. You can go to your post and update it as many times as needed and this will automatically update every single share. Do not make multiple posts. This scatters information that could be important and could be easily missed by you. Remember, every time you update your post or someone comments, this will shoot it back to the top of the pages you've shared it too. Multiple posts are detrimental to your search !! Remember to change the privacy settings to public. That's super important.

5-Create a flyer. Keep it simple. People don't read a lot of information on flyers. Put LOST in big print at the top, picture in the middle and phone number in big print at the bottom. That's it. Give these to your mail person, UPS/ FEDEX drivers, school bus drivers, deliver a stack along with rolls of tape to any local restaurants that deliver ( they'll usually tape them on boxes if you ask ) you can also tape these to immediate neighbors mailboxes. It's illegal to put them inside.

6- Make small posters. Use cardboard and stakes or buy yard sale signs at lowes and tape a flyer to the front and anything colorful to draw attention. Balloons work well or colored string, anything with some color. I put the flyers inside plastic page covers to protect them from the rain. These you will put at area stop signs where people stop and can't help but notice them. You can put them along long roads also. People do not notice flyers stuck on telephone poles.

7- Follow up every sighting. Go out and look. If you have game cameras, ask if you can put one out, specify that you will not point it towards people's homes. Leave an unwashed sock or something small along with a bit of food. Camera should be placed low to the ground. If it is your cat, move on to trapping if you can't immediately find him/her.

8-Setting a humane trap is a process. Please call a tracker or trapper for help. No trap should be left unattended, ever !! Cats freak in traps and can hurt themselves, they are exposed to weather, rain heat or cold and predators can easily run off with the trap with your cat inside. If you can't watch it either by being there or by a cellular alert camera, CLOSE IT !!!

9- Physically go to your local shelter to take a look at least every few days. The person who took your lost report may not be there the day your cat arrives and could easily be missed. Shelter personnel are super busy, too so it's always best to look yourself.

10- When to call a tracker and the role we play. As soon as possible. Remember, the fresher the scent, the better the results but more on that in a bit. Heat and wind are the most detrimental to a search with a tracking dog. Rain is not such a big problem unless it is a hard rain. If you've ever pet an animal and your hand is wet, the fur sticks to your hand. A light rain acts just like that and actually sticks the hair and cells to the ground.

Many people think we will find your animal when we come out. That doesn't happen most of the time and here is why. The dog is just another of our tools. Cats don't like dogs for the most part and your cat is already in a state of fear. If a strange dog gets close enough, we could run your cat even further away. We train alongside our dogs in order to be able to read their body language. The dog will get us to an area to concentrate on and then you will begin your search in this area. No one but someone the cat knows and likes should be going after your animal !! Along with the dog, we have specialized equipment. Mine is free to use for clients with a signed rental agreement that you will take care of the equipment. This includes, snake camera to look under buildings and in storm drains, night vision binoculars, traps, still cameras for initial search and live alert cameras for watching traps. I also make a few posters to get you started and help spread awareness on social media and will help you form a plan. I'm available to you every step of the way in your search. Most of us are friends with local TNR groups, also. Back to the dog. If a few days has gone by with no results and you decide you want to try a tracking dog, they do air scenting as well as tracking. This isn't quite as reliable as tracking because we would have to get reasonably close to your animal for the dog to pick up the scent but cats are usually close to home, too so definitely worth a try. Also, if you feel like hiring a tracker is not within your budget, call us anyway. We are human and we are animal lovers. Even if we don't bring the dog, we can offer advice and will still do all we can to help you.

I hope these tips help you should you ever need them. I have been through this with a lost dog and that began my career helping others with missing furkids. K9 Ruger has a diploma and letter of recommendation from a private trainer who helps train police and military dogs in Stafford co VA. She graduated at a level four which is as high as they can go. Radar is currently in training with a private trainer in Strasburg VA and will hopefully be graduating soon. We sincerely hope you never need us but are here if you do. Much love, Lisa, Ron, K9 Ruger & rising star, Radar !!

\*\* Final note: I have chased cats for as long as six months. The number one reason people don't get their cats back is giving up. Never give up!!!!!!!!!!!! I understand the despair. There can be many days with no activity or sightings. Dig your heels in, believe that your cat is out there and needs your help and keep at it !!\*\*