

National *Lost* Pet Prevention *Month*

One of the scariest experiences you can have as a pet parent is to lose your animal. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or ASPCA, looked into how many pets get lost every year. The organization found that 15 percent of pet guardians had lost a dog or cat in the previous five years. While about 93 percent of dogs that had gone astray were found, only 75 percent of missing cats made it back to their families. Instead of scrambling to find a pet that has disappeared, PetHub designated July as National Pet Prevention

Month and PetPlace is more than happy to help owners prevent the nerve-wracking situation from happening in the first place.

Why Pets Get Lost

Pets can go missing for many reasons. They may escape from an enclosed backyard or inadvertently get let out by your kids during a playdate. They might break away from the leash while you're on vacation or jump out of the car when you stop at a gas station. Or, some pets can panic when they hear the fireworks and thunderstorms that are common during the month of July.

A dog that gets off the leash or wanders to the other side of the park while you're playing fetch may get picked up by a Good Samaritan. However, if your dog gets into a car with a well-meaning stranger, it can be harder for you to find him. Dogs that get lost may also roam around, unable to find their way home. This is especially a concern if your dog is frightened. Wandering dogs may get in accidents or be attacked by another animal, making it physically impossible for them to return to you.

The most common lost cat scenario involves the cat getting trapped somewhere. When cats don't feel well, they tend to seclude themselves. This can make it tough

for you to find your cat even if she hasn't left the neighborhood. If your kitty found a safe place to hide in someone else's car, she might accidentally get transported far away from home.

Unfortunately, some pets get kidnapped. Dogs that are kept outside may get lured out of your yard with treats. If you tied your dog outside the coffee shop while you ran in for your morning Joe, a petnapper might just walk by and take her. Savvy pet snatchers may remove your pet's identifiers, such as ID tags and microchips, making it even more challenging for you to reunite with your animal.

Lost **Pet Prevention**

The best way to help a lost pet is to prevent the animal from going missing in the first place. Placing ID tags on a well-fitting collar is a great place to start. The collar should fit snugly enough that the animal can't slip it off. You should be able to fit one or two fingers underneath the collar to ensure that it's not too tight. Check the hardware on the collar regularly. Worn buckles or tags won't help you if they don't stay on your pet.

Microchipping is also an effective way to keep tabs on your furry friend. These tiny devices are implanted using a needle and typically remain inside the pet for

life. Most people know that they can bring a found animal to a veterinarian, shelter, or rescue organization to scan the pet for a microchip. When your pet's microchip is scanned, it will match up with your contact information in a database. If you do have your animal microchipped, make sure to keep your data updated. About half of pet owners don't submit contact information or keep it accurate in the microchip database, rendering the device useless.

Keeping your animal indoors is one of the best ways to prevent losing your pet. Cats can easily jump a 6-foot fence. Dogs may not be so agile, but they may try to make their own escape routes. If you can keep

your eye on your pet while it's outdoors, you can prevent a lost animal or pet-snatching scenario.

Many people with indoor pets neglect to put collars and ID tags on them. This is a mistake. If your indoor animal does run out the front door, it might be mistaken for a stray.

What Should You Do If Your Pet Does Go Missing?

The best thing to do is to start looking for your pet immediately. The longer you wait, the lower your chances are of recovering your furry friend. Posting signs and letting neighbors know can help everyone stay on the lookout for your little

buddy. Call local veterinarians and animal shelters. They will let you know if a rescuer brings in your animal.

Unfortunately, calling your dog's name repeatedly can make the dog more frightened, especially if others have tried to do so while reaching out to grab the dog. If you catch a glimpse of your dog running free, don't chase him or call to him. Even trying to approach the animal slowly can freak it out if it's already panicked. Getting down on your knees or even lying flat on the ground can help calm the animal.

If you're trying to capture a loose dog, pretending you're eating something that's tasty and smelly is

non-threatening. This can make the dog realize that it can trust you. Be patient. Eventually, you should be able to lure the dog into a crate or your car and bring it home.

How You Can Help

Becoming active in your community can help educate others about the importance of lost pet prevention. Volunteering at a shelter or handing out flyers at a local pet shop can help others learn about pet health awareness. During the month of July, many pet organizations are also working to get this important message out, and they will likely be grateful for the assistanc