

Finding A Lost Cat Tips

Frightened cats hide.

Frightened cats run until they find somewhere to hide. When you are looking for a lost cat, be sure to take a flashlight, even if it's broad daylight. A cat can hide in a very small space, so look carefully. If you can squeeze your hand in, your cat can squeeze himself in.

Look close by first!

Most cats don't go far. While a cat that's used to being outdoors will have a regular territory he patrols and could be anywhere inside that territory, it's probably not more than a block or two. If he's not used to being out, or doesn't know the area, he will likely be within 300 to 500 feet of where he was lost, if he can find a place to hide.

Look inside garages and outbuildings.

Look in garages and sheds, and ask if you can look in your neighbor's garages and sheds. Cats often go into sheds left open while someone is mowing, and are closed in till the grass grows out again. They go exploring when a garage is open, and hide when the door is being closed instead of trying to run out.

Look inside as well.

Check closets, drawers, and behind the washer, in the dryer, and behind the water heater. Cats can get into places they can't get out of. Be sure to look in the kitchen and bathroom cabinets.

Look and listen, don't just call.

A frightened cat will seldom come to you, but he may answer if you call him, so stop and listen carefully. He's not likely to make a lot of noise that would attract predators.

Look in any small hole, and under bushes and even ground covers.

Look under porches, sheds and houses, anywhere there may be a way to get underneath, even if you think the hole is too small for your cat to get in. Cats will choose the first likely spot when they first stop running, and find a better spot later. Cats often hide in dense shrubs, and will even flatten out

to hide under a ground cover. If your cat can't find a safe place on the ground, he will climb. He may get up in a tree or on a roof. If it's cold out, cats sometimes climb up into the engines of cars, which is very dangerous.

Make the sounds that mean dinner's ready.

Take the food outside and prepare it just as you would if kitty were there to eat. If he eats dry food, pour it into his bowl. If he eats canned, open the can, and dish out the food. If you use an electric can opener, use an extension cord and take the dinner show on the road. You may not have been able to train your cat to come when you call his name, but he knows what the clink of a spoon against his dish means. Don't leave the food out for him. It may attract other animals which will frighten him. But if the weather's dry, leave some water out for him in his own water bowl.

Sit quietly and read aloud at dusk and dawn.

Take a flashlight, sit down near a place where there is plenty of safe cover for your cat, and read aloud. Your cat is likely to be up and about at dusk and dawn, even if she doesn't know how to hunt. She's more likely to come to you if you are sitting quietly and she can hear the sound of your voice when you are speaking calmly, and there is no one else around.

Hand out fliers and ask people to look in their garages and outbuildings.

Fliers need only have a clear photo of your cat and telephone number that someone will answer or that is hooked to an answering machine. Just posting fliers is not as effective as talking to people.

Go to all the local shelters and the government agencies charged with picking up stray and lost animals and look for yourself, at least every other day.

Calling Animal Enforcement or shelter on the phone is not very effective. Any animal may become dirty, matted, and neglected looking very quickly, including a cat that normally keeps herself very very well groomed.

You will need to go to the shelters at least every other day. Few shelters can keep animals for more than 72 hours. It usually takes more than a few days for a cat to be picked up and brought to a shelter.

It's important to visit all the shelters within driving distance of where your pet was lost. In many areas stray animals picked up by a government agency which holds them for a period and then turns them over to a shelter. If someone took your pet in for a few days hoping you would knock on their door and ask about it, they might later drop your pet off at the shelter that's most convenient for them, rather than the one that's closest.

Put an ad in the local paper.

And in the papers in surrounding areas. Some people only look in the newspaper to locate an animal's owner. Advertising in the paper can also be important to establish you were actively looking for your pet in case someone were to claim it you meant to give it up or didn't want it.

Contact local rescue organizations.

Give them copies of your flier. Ask the shelter if they know of anyone caring for feral cats in the area, even if they don't work with them.

Give fliers to people that walk their dogs in the area.

They are more likely to spot animals than most people. If you go to the parks early, you may find people who regularly walk their dogs together as an informal group.