



## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A STRAY OR LOST CAT OR DOG**

There are three things you should always keep in mind if you see a stray animal: the safety of the animal, your own safety, and the safety of others.

When we see a dog in trouble—loose near traffic, for instance—it's easy to panic and with the best of intentions, create an even more dangerous situation. Slamming on the brakes could get you in an accident or scare the dog into running away or into traffic. React as calmly as possible and if you are not in a situation where you can safely pull over near the animal, take note (or have a passenger take note) of where you saw the animal and go back and pull over safely.

Whether on foot or in the car, the danger might not be in the situation, but the state of the animal itself. The dog may be scared, injured, or even rabid. If the animal appears to pose any threat of biting or attacking, do not approach it. Note its location and get help. If possible, stay at the scene where you can observe the animal until help arrives, so you can assist them in locating the stray.

### **You have the stray or lost dog or cat —now what?**

If the animal is friendly and can be approached safely and you feel you can safely take it with you, entice it to come to your car with friendly commands or the promise of a treat. If the animal is collarless and tagless, take it to the nearest vet. The vet can scan it for a microchip with the owners' contact info. You can also ask there if anyone has reported the animal lost.

Don't assume that just because you found a dog wandering the streets that it was abandoned or unwanted. As any of us who own dogs can attest, it's very easy for the most beloved pets to go astray. You know you'd want whoever found your pet to make every effort to find you, so return the favour, even if it feels like fate that you found this new friend.

## Going the extra mile to help the stray or lost dog or cat

The first thing to do is take some good photos of the dog or cat and post them onto Facebook or the internet. If you don't use Facebook, you can put up posters around the area the animal was found. Do whatever you can think of to get the word out to the animal's family that their pet is safe and sound and ready to come home. Again, think about what you'd want someone to do if they found your pet.

If enough time has passed and no owners have come forward you might consider fostering the animal until a suitable home can be found or adopting the animal yourself. Just remember to set realistic expectations for you and your family (especially young children) that the owner's original family might still turn up. Dogs may be man's best friend, but they sometimes need to rely on the kindness of strangers. Today, you can be the one who helps them out in their time of need and tomorrow, hopefully their owners will repay it, so that someday if your pet ever needs a helping hand, someone will be there for it.

If a cat or a dog has no visible identification, looks well-kept, and is in no obvious distress, chances are it has an owner somewhere. The absence of a cat collar does not necessarily mean anything, since most cat collars are designed to come off if the cat snags it on something.