



WHAT TO DO IF YOU'VE LOST OR FOUND A DOG

Lost your dog?

Even the most obedient and well guarded dog can disappear on occasion. Hopefully your dog will find his way home or will be returned by a kind member of the public, but if not we suggest you take immediate action to find him.

Remember - by law your dog must wear a collar with your name and address inscribed on it, or on a disc attached to it, whenever he is out in public.

- This means it's easier for your dog to be returned to you quickly by a member of the public or a local authority animal warden.
- Have your dog Microchipped! Collars and tags can fall off or be removed; microchipping is a more permanent form of identifying your dog. Dogs Trust are currently offering **FREE** microchipping across the country.

Who to contact?

1. Your Local Authority Dog Warden

- Dogs found straying will usually be picked up by a local dog or animal warden and taken to a holding kennel. Dog wardens are legally responsible for stray dogs so this is the first place you should call.
- You should be able to contact your local dog warden through the Environmental Health Department of your local council.
- The dog warden must legally hold onto a stray dog for 7 days (5 days in Northern Ireland) before they can rehome him, pass him onto a rehoming organisation or have him humanely put to sleep.

2. Your local police station

- Contact the police if you think your dog has been stolen.
- The police will pick up stray dogs if they are found chasing or worrying livestock, but in all other cases stray dogs are the responsibility of the local authority (as above).

3. Kennels and Rehoming Centres

- Even if the police and dog warden have no record of your pet being handed in, ask them for the details of their holding kennels and call them anyway. A member of the public may have taken your dog there directly.
- Contact any other kennels in the area, including boarding kennels.
- Contact all the rehoming centres in your area, such as Dogs Trust, RSPCA, Blue Cross, Battersea and National Animal Welfare Trust. You may also find that there are some small local sanctuaries. Look in your local phone directory under 'Animal Welfare' for contact details, or try your vet or library.
- If your dog is a pedigree, try local breeders. Contact the Kennel Club - 0844 463 3980 – for details of your local breed rescue group.

4. Veterinary surgeries

- Phone around all of the veterinary surgeries in your area. Sadly, your dog may have been involved in a traffic accident or a dog fight and may have been taken to the vet for treatment.
- Leave your details with the vet so they can contact you should a dog of his description come into the surgery.

5. Noticeboards, registers and social media

- Occasionally a member of the public will take in a stray pet and look after it until the owner is found. We don't advise people to do this, but if they do they must contact the dog warden and other interested parties.
- It is worth checking the local vet surgeries, supermarket noticeboards, shops, libraries, local newspapers and other public noticeboards to see if anyone is searching for the owner of a dog that fits your pet's description.
- Ask if you can put notices up in these places - preferably a colour poster with an up-to-date photograph of your dog.
- Social Media is free and very effective – post to Facebook, Twitter Instagram etc so that your friends and followers can join in the search.
- Consider registering your dog with a national lost dog database, such as DogLost (0844 800 3220) - www.doglost.co.uk
- If you live within the M25 motorway, you can also try the Battersea Lost Dogs & Cats Line (020 7627 9245. Lines are open from Monday to Sunday, 8am to 6pm.).

6. Local areas & buildings

- Visit places where you usually walk your dog - he may have decided to walk himself!
- Look around your local area and if you've moved house recently, ask around at your last address – it's surprising how far dogs have been known to travel.
- If there are any building sites or workmen in your area, ask around in case your dog has become trapped somewhere on site.

Why do dogs stray?

- It's most likely a dog has run off to find the company of other dogs or to find food – so make sure that your dog has frequent access to both of these things.
- If your garden fence is broken or not high enough then most dogs will escape given the choice - so fix it so that your dog can't get out.
- If your dog is likely to run out of your front door when you open it, make sure that you shut him away safely in another room before you do so.
- Dogs that are bored or are brimming with energy are more likely to escape from the house or garden in search of an adventure - so make sure that your dog gets enough exercise, play and training time with you to use his brain and wear him out.
- If your dog runs off when you are on a walk with him because he has seen other dogs or caught a whiff of a scent, keep him on an extending or long lead until you have taught him to come back on command. Read our 'Basic Dog Training' factsheet for more information.
- If your dog is not neutered then he or she may be escaping in the search for a mate. This can lead to unwanted litters of puppies as well as being the cause of traffic accidents, or result in your male dog getting into fights and being a general nuisance. The answer to this is to have your dog neutered - he or she will not

miss the 'urge' and will soon be happy to stay at home, safe with the rest of the family.

We are only too well aware of the distress that can be caused when a much loved pet goes missing. We hope that the advice in this factsheet is helpful in getting your dog returned safely.

Found a dog?

- Check to see if the dog is wearing any form of identification that will enable you to return him directly to his owner. If not - or if you'd prefer...
- Take the dog home and contact the local authority dog warden straight away and arrange for him/her to collect the dog.

Please remember that rehoming organisations can only take dogs that have been directly signed over by their rightful owner for rehoming, or those that have been passed to them by the local authority dog warden after being held for 7 days. Rehoming Centres cannot take strays directly off the street or from well-meaning members of the public.

What if I would like to adopt the dog?

- If you find a stray, hand him over to the dog warden and explain that you would be keen to adopt him after the seven day period. They can then pass your details to the kennels. If they feel you are suitable you will be expected to go through their normal adoption criteria for transfer of ownership (if the owner is not found). Remember to request details from the dog warden of where the dog will be held and liaise with the kennel manager. Maintaining regular contact with the kennels will enable you to check on the dog's progress and reassure the kennels of your commitment.
- If you keep the dog in your home, you must still inform the dog warden. You are then obliged by law to keep the dog for a period of 28 days, then can keep him until such time that a person with proof of ownership claims him - in other words legal ownership is not transferred to you and the original owner may demand the dog back at any time, no matter how long you have kept him or how much money you have spent (including any vet's fees).

Why is it not advisable to look after the dog in my own home?

- It is a legal requirement for you to alert the authorities if you find a stray. If you don't, you could be accused of theft - the intention to permanently deprive the rightful owner of their property (Theft Act 1968).
- The description of the dog you leave with the local authority may not match up to that of the owner looking for their dog, possibly leading to misunderstandings and preventing a bereft owner from getting their much loved pet back.
- The dog may be microchipped but won't be scanned unless he goes into the local authority kennel.
- It is too easy to become emotionally attached. Handing the dog back to the owner can then be very traumatic.
- By dealing directly with the owner, the dog warden has the opportunity to discuss the responsibilities of dog ownership, to give advice on identification and follow up the case if necessary.
- Most importantly, in our experience, handing the dog over to the dog warden will give the owner the greatest chances of being reunited with their much loved companion.

For more information about Dogs Trust, to become a member, sponsor a long-term resident or help us in our campaigns please call 020 7837 0006 or write to: Dogs Trust, 17 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7RQ.

www.dogstrust.org.uk

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