

Finding Fido

Dr. Ruth MacPete, DVM

Ruth has more than 15 years of experience in the veterinary industry as a companion animal veterinarian in private practice. Along with being a writer and media personality, she is also a founding member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team.

[Dr. Ruth Macpete](#) offers advice in the event your pet becomes lost.

As a shelter vet I see lost pets on a regular basis. Sadly, many of these animals are never reunited with their families. It is especially heart-wrenching to see animals wearing collars but not wearing an ID tag because we know they belong to someone, but without an ID tag or microchip, it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to contact their family. We can only hope that their family comes to the shelter to claim them.

Losing a pet is every pet parent's worst nightmare, but there are steps you can take pre-emptively and things you can do if your pet gets lost to increase the odds that you'll get your pet back.

To improve your chances of a successful reunion, your pet should always wear a collar with identification tags. Better yet, microchip your pet. Though collars and identification tags are important, they can break or fall off. Microchips are permanently implanted under your pet's skin and store identifying information linked to a database to help reunite you with your pet. Just make sure you keep your contact information up to date. In my opinion, every animal should wear a collar with ID tags and have a microchip, and this holds true for indoor-only cats as well. All it takes is an open door or window for an indoor-only cat to get out and become lost. Why risk losing your beloved pet? Take advantage of this technology and microchip your pet today!

Unfortunately, even with the best precautions, pets can get lost. A door or window can accidentally get left open; animals can slip outside when people are coming and going; dogs can jump, climb over, or dig under a fence in an attempt to get out of the yard. The fact is, accidents happen and animals become lost everyday. In the event that your pet gets lost, here are some tips

that can help reunite you with your lost pet:

- 1.** Immediately make a flyer with your pet's picture, a description of your pet, and your contact information. Plaster these signs everywhere, especially where your pet was last seen, at local pet stores, and dog parks.
- 2.** Go to the local animal shelters to look for your lost pet. Even shelters that list their animals online may need a few hours to a few days to update their website with new animals. When you go to the shelter, ask the staff if they have any animals in the back that you may have missed and be sure bring flyers to leave with the shelter staff. Sometimes sick or injured animals are off public view when being treated in the shelter's medical center or at a local emergency clinic.
- 3.** Good Samaritans often bring injured animals directly to local veterinary hospitals or emergency clinics. Make sure you go to local veterinary hospitals and emergency clinics to look for your pet and bring flyers.
- 4.** Finally, post an ad in the lost pet section of your local newspaper or on Craigslist. And of course, check the listings for found pets in local publications and online.

Losing your pet can be a harrowing experience. Taking these pre-emptive measures and knowing what to do if your pet is lost is your best chance for a speedy and safe return of your lost furry loved one.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian - they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.