



Dog Gone it, You Lost Your Pet

Introduction

You've lost your beloved family pet.

Quick. What do you do and where do you turn?

During the stress and anxiety of a missing best friend, the last thing you want to do is spend your precious time researching the answer to that question. All you want is as much information as possible to get your pet back home safe and sound.

That's just what the author and contributors try to provide for you in this 11-page ***Dog Gone it*** booklet. The contributors listed below are veterans of animal rescue and recovery, and have generously donated their knowledge to ***Dog Gone it*** in the hope that you will be better equipped to find your lost pet.

May God bless each of you as your search for your lost pet. I pray that ***Dog Gone it*** will help guide you in relocating him/her quickly and safely.

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***Dog Gone it* makes this information brochure available on the understanding that you will exercise your own skill and care. As in all animal-related events, please exercise caution for yourself and your pet when attempting to recover a lost pet that may be disoriented, frightened or injured. If you need help, please seek it.**

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Dog Gone it, You Lost Your Pet

What comes next?



TIME IS CRITICAL

What you do right now could make the difference as to whether or not your pet survives and whether you get your pet back. ***Don't*** “wait and see.” ***Think:*** ***Amber Alert for Animals.***

Work like a Dog

Knowing your pet's behavior will help you know where to look.

Is your pet friendly, aloof or downright afraid?

- ***Friendly.*** Look around the lost site, as your pet probably has sought out other pets and/or humans who are nearby.
- ***Aloof.*** Aloof pets will usually wander out of curiosity and probably shy away from humans; however, they can usually be coaxed with food, but use caution. Even your own pet can become skittish and/or fearful and not respond, or worse, respond in an unpredictable way. Approach slowly and speak in comforting tones. Get on your knees, lowering yourself to a level with the pet to reduce their fear.
- ***Afraid.*** Pets that are afraid can travel far distances and be very difficult to approach – even by their owners. Rather than approaching your frightened pet, which may encourage your pet to stay on the run, back away and consider a baited trap. Humane pet trapping is the safest way to catch your “afraid” pet without injury to you or your pet. Buy, borrow or rent a pet trap at a local pet supply or rental store. Your vet's office may have one you can use. Put foods with strong odor inside the trap that a hungry and scared pet will smell so it is enticed to go inside and eat; tuna or cooked livers are good. Also put an article of your clothing in the trap. Your scent on the clothing may calm a frightened pet.

In the first hour that your pet goes missing, do the obvious:

- Immediately travel throughout the lost-pet area calling your pet by name. In this first hour, work the closest area. If this is unsuccessful, you won't limit your search to this area only but, for now, focus on the lost pet area.
- Immediately solicit friends, family and neighbors to help look for your pet. If they are unable to search, put them to work with other duties: calling neighbors and making signs (discussed below).



🐾 If your pet is not found after an hour, waste no more time. Shift gears and immediately follow the guidelines below.

🐾 Make Lost Pet Signs to post around the area of the lost pet – and beyond:

- A pet can travel many miles away from home in just hours, depending on their size and behavior. Some pets start running and don't stop. Some are carried to another location by well-meaning rescuers. Others find the security of nearby neighborhoods comforting and settle in. Even if a lost pet settles close to home, though, if you don't get the word out, no one will know to be on the lookout.
- The larger the sign, the better; 28 x 22" *minimum* size.
- Use bright, neon poster paper purchased from an office supply, grocery, craft store or Wal-Mart. Dollar Tree has two pieces for \$1.
- Use giant, waterproof markers for lettering (Example: Sharpie Magnum Marker \$3.49). You can freehand letters or use a stencil.
- Write letters large enough to be seen by someone driving by in a car, because these signs will be placed near roadways.

🐾 What to stencil or freehand on your Lost Pet Sign.

- Stencil or freehand in letters at least 4" high letters the words "Reward" and the dollar amount. Leaving a reward amount unspecified is no motivator. The higher the amount, the more motivated someone is to help find your pet or to call you with information if your pet is seen.
- Be wary of pet-recovery scams and people claiming to have your pet. Ask any pet-finder individual to describe your pet thoroughly with information you have not furnished before proceeding. Because pet-finder individuals may not really have your pet, do not give or wire any money for the return of your pet until you have confirmed beyond a doubt that it is your pet.
- Stencil or freehand your area code and phone number — a number that you or someone will answer 24/7.

🐾 Description sheets to attach to your Lost Pet Signs:

- Print a photo (preferably in color) of your pet, and tape it to your Lost Pet Sign as shown at the right.
- On a separate 8.5 x 11" paper, print a description of your pet including:
 - Breed and sex,
 - Age and weight,
 - Slight description (optional), *and*
 - Phone (include area code) and/or e-mail.



- You're using two separate sheets for photo and description because you'll post these Lost Pet Signs by the roadways and everything on it needs to be as large as possible for drivers to read.
- Use bullets points to accent your lost pet information. Studies show that bulleted information is more easily read and remembered than information that is not.
- ***Use only key words.*** Studies show that readers will not read full sentences; rather, pick key words to remember. Brief is best!
- Write letters large enough to be seen by someone driving by in a car.
- Use wide strapping or other clear packaging tape (Example: Scotch 3 x 2" \$1.69) to tape both photo and description sheets to the Lost Pet Sign. For weather protection, either use protective, clear page covers, Ziplock® bags or simply tape over both 8.5 x 11" sheets top to bottom.

 ***Immediately post your Lost Pet Signs at roadsides and intersections of the lost pet area and beyond with staple gun or strapping tape:***

- It is unlawful to post large signs on utility poles or road signs. Both Richland and Lexington county zoning laws prohibit attaching advertising signs to utility poles, street signs, stop signs and attaching or painting signs on tree trunks, rocks and other natural objects. Under Lexington county law, the illegal posting of an advertising sign carries a maximum fine of \$1,087 per violation, per day.
- Ask private housing developments and subdivisions for permission to temporarily display your Lost Pet Sign at their entrances.
- Use outdated and unused real estate and/or political signs as your base sign if available, and staple your Lost Pet Sign on top of the previous sign.
- Ask neighbors and friends for permission to staple your Lost Pet Sign to a tree in their front yard.
- Ask your banker, gas station attendant and other businesses with whom you do business to allow placement of your Lost Pet Sign on their property near the roadway.
- Ask your vet to allow placement of your Lost Pet Sign on their property near the roadway.
- When posting a Lost Pet Sign near roadways, consider posting two or three signs spaced in a row, in the event the driver misses information on the first or second sign, perhaps they can pick it up on the third.
- Use your car (and friends' and neighbors') to display your Lost Pet Sign.

🐾 Make an 8.5 x 11" version of your Lost Pet Sign for distribution as handouts:



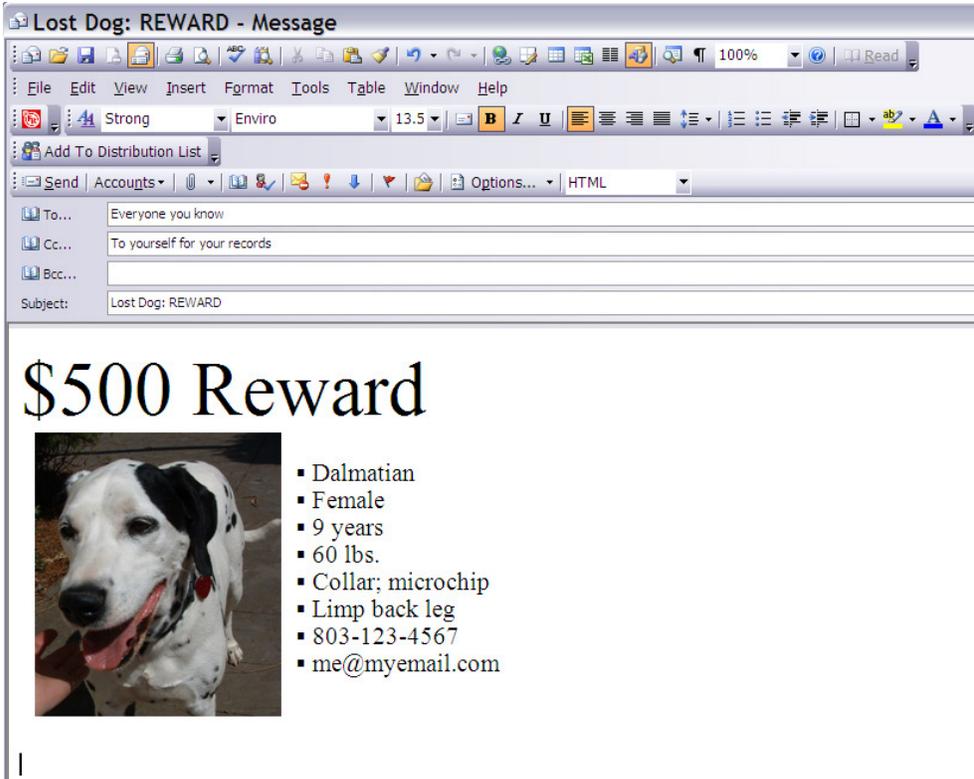
- If you know the area of the lost pet (and even if unsure) distribute handouts into homeowners' *paper* box. It is unlawful to put items in mailboxes.
- These smaller Lost Pet versions can be very effective handouts but are not as effective to post as the larger Lost Pet Signs, simply because fewer people will see them due to the size.

🐾 Immediately mass e-mail and Facebook your 8.5 x 11" Lost Pet handout to neighbors and friends, and ask them to forward the e-mail to everyone in their e-mail address book.

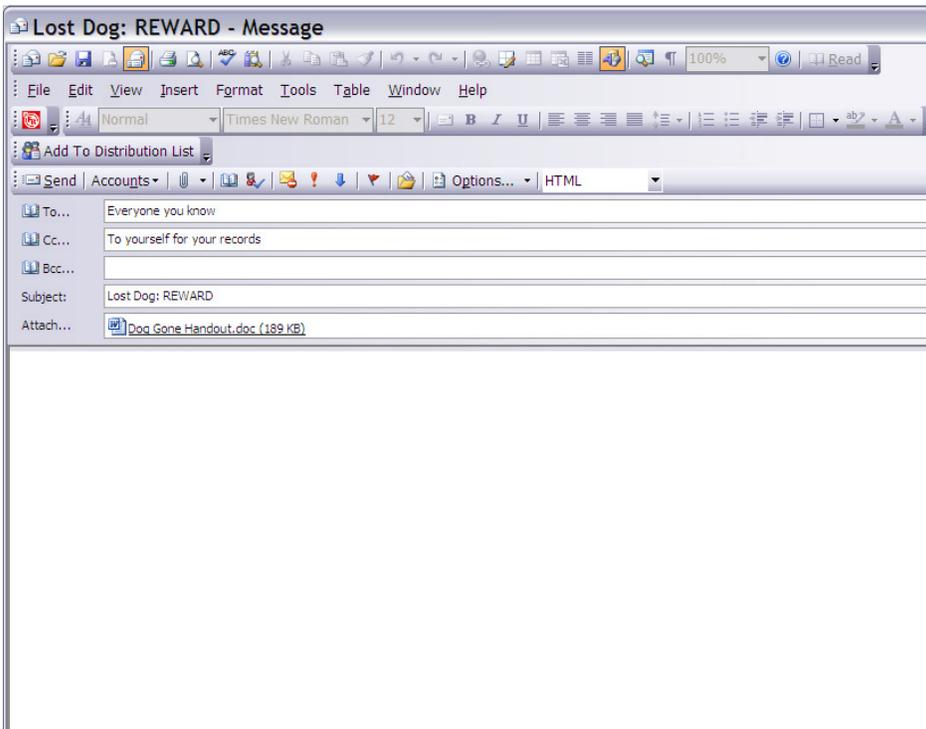
- Locate the nearest neighborhood association in your lost pet area that might be willing to provide you with neighbors' personal information so that you can call, e-mail or fax them notices of your missing pet.

NOTE: When e-mailing your Lost Pet handout, DO NOT send your handout as a separate e-mail attachment. Rather, send the Lost Pet handout in the body of the e-mail where it is readable as soon as the recipient opens the e-mail. More people will read whatever is right before them vs. clicking on an attachment.

Send your mass e-mail with your Lost Pet handout showing in the body of the e-mail, like this:



DO NOT send your e-mail with your Lost Pet handout as an attachment only, like this:



 ***If friends and family can't help distribute handouts or physically search, ask them to help make Lost Pet Signs.***

 ***Contact the police and file a missing pet report.***

 ***Call local newspapers:***

- *The State* newspaper at (803) 771-8550.
- *The Star* at (803) 771-0291 or e-mail mike@thecolumbiastar.com.
- *The Daily Gamecock* at (803) 777-3888 editor@dailygamecock.com.
- *Free Times* at (803) 765-0707 or classy@free-times.com.
- *The State* newspaper offers discounted fees for lost pets (17 characters per line; 5 lines for \$10.50). Ask other newspapers for their lost pet notice fee schedules.
- Cut-off time for next-day weekly printing newspapers is 5:00 p.m. the day before. Cut off time for next-day Saturday printing is 12:00 noon on Friday.
- A good ad example is: **LOST \$__00 Reward; Female German Shepherd; Alexander area; (803) 123-4567 or me@myserver.com**. Remember, brief is best!
- Limit information in the ad. Scammers could target you using the information you provide.

 ***Contact other lost-and-found sources:***

- www.thecenterforlostpets.com was created by a team of dedicated specialists, shelter managers, disaster and safety experts, vets and a variety of pet gurus.
- www.checkthechip.com was created to enter your pet's microchip number, then determine which microchip registry database to contact about your missing pet.
- **HomeAgain.com** is a microchip company that specializes in pet recovery services, reuniting more than 600,000 pets with their owners. When you report your pet lost, HomeAgain® sends rapid lost pet alerts with your pet's Lost Pet handout to members of the HomeAgain® Pet Recovery Network within a 25-mile radius. Their nationwide lost pet network includes more than 450,000 veterinarians, animal shelters and volunteer pet rescuers ready to help protect and recover your lost pet. HomeAgain® requires membership before sending lost pet alerts, but for a \$16 annual membership, it's an extremely good aid.
- **Craigslist.org** is a centralized network of online communities, featuring free online classified advertisements and announcements.
- **Petfinder.com** is an online, searchable database of animals that need homes. It is also a directory of more than 13,000 animal shelters and adoption organizations across the U.S., Canada and Mexico, which could be helpful in locating those in your area that you want to contact to distribute your Lost Pet Handout.
- **Findtoto.com** is a paid-for service that can place thousands of telephone calls in one hour to notify your neighbors of your lost pet.
- Call or e-mail rescue groups and ask them to run a courtesy lost pet listing on their website. A few, listed alphabetically, are:

- *Animal Protection League* (803) 783-2119.
- *FIDO Rescue* (803) 796-2390.
- *Homeward Bound Pet Rescue* (803) 454-9094.
- *Pawmetto Lifeline* (803) 407-0991.
- *PETS, Inc. The Carolinas Humane Society* (803) 739-9333.
- *SQ Rescue, Susan Bennett* (803) 467-2197
- *Wescott Acres, Laura Mitchell* (803) 407-4708
- Pet's Inc. Lost & Found program offers a 12-hours- a-day, 7-days-a-week answering service for those who purchase an additional Pets, Inc. identifying tag. Cost is \$5 for a lifetime registration.
- Contact local kennels, pet stores, pet grooming and dog obedience facilities to get their faxes and/or e-mails and send them a handout to post.
- Call nearby vet offices to get their faxes and/or e-mails and send them a handout to post.

Contact local shelters:

- www.animalshelter.org/shelters/states.asp state-by-state listing of local shelters.
- Richland County Animal Control at 400 Powell Road, Columbia, SC 29203 (803) 576-2461.
- Lexington County Animal Shelter at 321 Ball Park Road, Lexington, SC 29072 (803) 785-8149; animalsrvc@lex-co.com.
- Columbia Animal Control at 127 Humane Lane, Columbia, SC 29209 (803) 776-7387; mcdrum@columbiasc.net.
- Cayce Animal Services at 2 Lavern Jumper, Cayce, SC 29033 (803) 926-5884, serving Cayce, West Columbia and Springdale.
- Consider e-mailing or faxing your handout to shelters in neighboring cities. Pets can travel extensive distances and/or be carried by well-meaning people who then decide to surrender them to a shelter in another location.

The shelter has your pet. What comes next?

Whether your pet has or doesn't have a microchip (an identifying integrated circuit — about the size of a grain of rice — implanted under the skin of a dog, cat or other animal containing pet's owner information), **collar or identifiable tags, here's what happens next:**

- Your pet will be held at a shelter for **five (5) days** (**fourteen (14) days** at some shelters if a pet's I.D. is traceable, in which case the shelter will attempt to contact you at the last phone number (or contact information) on the microchip file).
- At the end of that five-day (5-day) holding period, your pet has a good chance of being **killed** at the shelter. Shelters are over capacity and cannot hold your pet indefinitely.

- Continue calling and visiting the shelter until you find your pet. It's possible that someone rescued your pet, has held your pet for a while, then released your pet to a shelter days, weeks or even months later.

NOTE: A visit to a local shelter is safer and more productive than phone calls. Visit local shelters at least once a day if possible to look for your lost pet. You only have five (5) days from the time your pet arrives at the shelter. Your pet's life may depend on it. Don't rely on county/city staff members. They're overworked and won't see every animal entering the facility. Pets can slip through the cracks. Don't let yours be one of those. Visit immediately – and often.

Look What the Cat Dragged In

Oh happy day! You've found your pet. Don't stop there. Do the following:

🐾 Take your pet to your vet for a checkup even if he/she appears to be fine.

- Internal trauma could have taken place that wouldn't show outwardly.
- Scrounging for food could leave your pet full of intestinal or other worms, which can ultimately be deadly.
- Grooming and/or a bath will enable you to find ticks, fleas, scratches or other skin problems — not to mention it will feel good.

🐾 If you need to have your pet microchipped, do it now!

🐾 If you need to update your pet's information with HomeAgain® or another microchip company, do it now!

🐾 To protect a male from staying on the mating run or to prevent a female from becoming pregnant while on the run, if you need to have your pet spayed or neutered, do it now!

🐾 If your pet needs a new collar, get one now!

🐾 If your pet needs appropriate, identifiable tags, get them now!

🐾 Your pet should have:

- A rabies tag indicating that your pet is up-to-date on his/her rabies vaccination. These are obtained from your vet's office or a Mobile Pet Vaccination Service.
 - Pawmetto Lifeline (803) 407-0991 offers through their Care a Van (careavansc.com), low-cost vaccinations and microchipping.
 - Pets, Inc. (803) 739-9333 also offers, through their Cheap Shots Vaccination Clinic (petsinc.org), low-cost vaccinations and microchipping.
 - The Animal Protection League also offers microchipping once a



month at various Animal Supply House locations. Call (803) 783-2119 for more information.

- A city and/or county tag indicating that your pet is registered within the boundary of your residential address. To obtain a city or county tag, contact Columbia Animal Shelter at (803) 776-7387; Richland County (803) 929-6000, www.animalcare.richlandonline.com/License.asp, or contact Columbia Animal Services at (803) 776-PETS (7387) for more information. Lexington County does not require a license.

🐾 It's not enough for your pet to have only a rabies tag as an identifier.

It is vital that your pet have:



- A personal, identifying tag with at least two phone numbers, so that a pet finder can contact you 24/7.
- If the pet tag offers additional space, add an address or an area of town.
- ***Pettags.com*** (see below) will print information on both sides of your tag. Consider one side displaying any medical information, or simply the word “Reward.”
- ***Why is this personal identifying tag so important?*** If your pet is found with only a rabies tag, which doesn't identify the owner and only identifies a vet's office, and the vet's office is closed after hours for an extended holiday period, you're depending on the pet finder to hold your pet safely — while you remain frantic — until the pet finder can contact your vet for your personal information.
- Please secure a personal, identifying tag ***in addition to other required pet tags.***
 - ***Pettags.com*** is a good tag company, very inexpensive with quick shipping time. You can order a simple, custom tag for as little as \$5.
 - Some local pet stores have engraving machines onsite that can produce tags in five minutes for under \$10.

🐾 Consider formal or informal pet training to teach your pet to:

- Be content in the living area,
- Stay inside when an opened-door opportunity presents itself, *and*
- Come to you when called.

Call Off the Dogs

🐾 Happy endings. Share the joy.

Look back over your list during the period when your pet was lost. Those who directly and indirectly helped would like to know that your pet is home safely. Following your saga from beginning to end will touch lives and let people see that what they did to help — no matter the degree — brought about a happy ending to this lost pet story. People are more available to help you or someone else next time

when they realize they can have an impact and that, by working together, a pet can be found.

 ***Thank you.***

Send an e-mail thank you to friends, neighbors, rescue groups, vets offices and any others who posted your Lost Pet Sign. Receiving this good news and being able to remove your Lost Pet Sign is a triumphant day for them and also allows space for another lost pet to be posted.