



Paws & Effect



The Newsletter of the SPCA of Northern Virginia

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Turn Lost into Found

♥ BY *Angel Fischer*

When my husband and I adopted two kittens from our local humane society in Rochester, N.Y., they were already microchipped. As soon as we got Mango and Dash home, I also insisted our indoor-only kittens learn to wear collars with their names and our phone number on them – just in case they ever managed to get outside. While I knew the two best preventative measures to protect my kittens in the event they got lost, I was completely unprepared when Dash lived up to his name and dashed away shortly after we moved to northern Virginia.

My husband and I did the obvious things first: go out searching and make posters, but we have since learned there are more things to consider when a pet goes missing. Whether you're looking for a cat or a dog, most of the steps to finding a lost pet are the same:

1. Start Looking & Get the Word Out

Begin where you believe your pet escaped; look in every conceivable hiding place on your property; and then move outward. Take a flashlight with you – even during the day – because cat and

dog eyes are very reflective. As you expand your search, make sure you have a photo of your pet to show people you see. Enlist your neighbors, delivery personnel, and anyone else regularly in your neighborhood to help in the search, or to at least keep an eye out and spread the word. Also, give people specific instructions on what to do if they see your pet. Depending on your pet's personality, it may be better to have people contact you rather than approach your pet.

2. Use Enticements

While you're out looking, take your pet's favorite treats and/or toys – anything that may get their attention and lure them out of hiding. Put food, water, bedding, or other things with familiar scents on them outside in a safe place to attract them back to your home.

3. Network

Contact local shelters to file lost pet reports and increase your search resources. Take advantage of social media – post on Facebook, Twitter, and other sites on both your own accounts and local shelter and rescue pages. If your pet is microchipped, contact the microchip company to report the loss and to make sure your contact information is up to date. There are also several websites that assist in pet retrieval, many of which you can find on the SPCA NOVA website at www.spcanova.org/lost/index.php.



ABOVE: Naomi ran away three times before settling into her forever home. Read her story on page 8.

TOP: Mango and Dash have been wearing collars since they were kittens.

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Lost *from page 1*

4. Advertise

Make signs that include in large, clear letters, “Lost Dog/Cat,” a photo and brief description of your pet, the date lost, and contact information where someone can reach you or a friend at any time. If possible, offer a reward, but don’t list a specific amount. You may also want to omit a unique characteristic of your pet to verify the honesty of anyone who calls claiming to have found them. Post the signs in your neighborhood, at local stores, area public bulletin boards, and vet offices. Just be aware of posting laws so you don’t waste time and effort on a sign that will be removed. Another option to consider is paying for a robocalling service that sends out calls to your neighbors to notify them of the lost pet.

5. Set a Humane Trap

If you haven’t found your pet after a couple of days, rent or borrow a humane trap from a shelter or animal rescue organization – or find someone who is skilled at using them. This is especially effective if you have a good idea of where your pet is, but they don’t feel safe approaching you or other people. Food placed in the trap can lure them in, at which

point a mechanism is tripped to close the cage. Only use traps when you can monitor them every hour or so because some pets may panic once trapped, or you could inadvertently trap other animals (which you can simply release).

6. Hire a Professional

If you’re still not having any luck finding your pet, you may want to consider hiring a pet detective or pet tracker who uses dogs to find animals by scent.

7. Don’t Give Up

It can take days, weeks, or longer to recover your pet, so don’t give up the search. Revisit places you think are good hiding spots; try searching in new locations; continue to check in with shelters and social media. Just don’t give up!

Special Tips for Cats and Dogs

Indoor-Only Cats

If your indoor-only cat escapes, there’s a good chance they aren’t really lost, but hiding. Cats are territorial, and an indoor-only cat, whose territory is inside your home, will feel lost outside and want to find a safe place to



The drain where I found Dash was just a few yards away from our apartment. He was perched on the inner ledge.



hide. These cats may also not respond to your voice out of fear of predators finding them. Search high and low and in any nook and cranny you can find. Also, search at dawn and dusk when cats may feel safest to venture out of their hiding places.

Indoor/Outdoor Cats

Indoor/outdoor cats have already established their territory outside, so if your cat goes missing, it means something has probably happened to them. Most likely, these cats have been driven away by an animal or person (figuratively or literally), have become trapped, or are ill or injured. When conducting your search, consider if anything has changed in your neighborhood, such as new construction. If you’ve recently moved, it’s possible your cat is searching for their old territory.

Dogs

The size and fitness of your dog will help determine the initial scope of your search. A small or frail dog won’t be able to go as far as a large or

healthy dog. Since dogs spend more time outside than cats, think about their favorite spots and check those first. Include area dog parks in your search and sign distribution. Also, dogs will most likely be out in the mornings through afternoons and be sleeping at night.

Prevention

I’ve already mentioned that microchipping and ID collars are good preventative measures to protect your pets. Not only do they give a stranger who recovers your pet a means to contact you, but they are also useful even from a distance to help searchers differentiate between a pet with a loving home and a stray dog or feral cat. With dogs, it’s best to always use a leash when outside to keep them from chasing a distraction. Finally, take photos of your pets. Not only is it a great way to document your life together, but a recent photo can be

crucial to finding them if they go missing.

My Story

By now you may be wondering what happened to my cat Dash. After he had been missing for 10 days, we began to lose hope, but that evening as my husband and I were driving to dinner, we spotted him trotting down the sidewalk just a few buildings away from our apartment. I tried to get him to come to me, but he was terrified. A car drove by, and I lost sight of him. Then a few minutes later, I heard a cat crying. I followed the sound to a drain by the side of the road where I was able to grab him by the scruff and get him home safely.

That was three years ago. If I had known then some of the things I know now, we probably could have found Dash even sooner.



Today, Dash seems content to keep his exploring inside our home.

Hot Event Raises Cold Cash for SPCA NOVA

On Sunday, April 19, nearly a thousand Northern Virginians descended on the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner for the second annual Yelp Fire and Ice Ball. Most attendees dazzled in



either red or white, in keeping with the fire and ice theme, and while there was no cost to attend, organizers suggested a \$10 donation at the door, with all proceeds benefitting SPCA NOVA.

Event sponsors ranged from Pretzel Crisps and Krave Jerky to Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and Dolce Vita Salon and Spa, all of whom offered demos or free product

samples. Guests enjoyed performances from Cast of Thousands, live music via Triforce Quartet, and spun beats courtesy of Electric Entertainment.

Positioned at a table laden with brochures and newsletters, as well as "puppy pops" and Kit Kats, SPCA NOVA President Dana Meeker and volunteer Katie McHenry accepted donations and exchanged rescue stories with fellow animal lovers. By the end of the night, the event had raised more than \$3,500 thanks to Yelp's nomination of SPCA NOVA as this year's beneficiary.

SPCA NOVA would like to thank everyone at Yelp NoVa, especially Yelp Community Manager and self proclaimed "crazy dog lady" Gretchen Powell, for providing

Nearly 1,000 people attended the ball and were entertained with special performances, food, and free product samples.



SPCA NOVA President Dana Meeker hands out goodies and accepts donations at the Yelp Fire and Ice Ball.

us the opportunity to fundraise at such a wonderfully unique event. If you're interested in learning more about future Yelp-sponsored events, you can follow them locally at Facebook.com/YelpNoVa or on Twitter via @yelpnova.

