

Response time *can* be crucial to a search effort but a late start is better than doing nothing at all. Ask family or friends to help you with the tasks or just do the best *you* can as quickly as possible. If a dog is discovered missing or bolts from a guardian, the following should be done *immediately*:

NEVER CHASE a lost dog - chasing is usually perceived as a threatening action, *not* a game.

The person with whom the dog has the strongest bond should start to search and walk all sighting areas. Grab a leash, bait food, and the dog's favorite toy. Human food is more tempting than dry biscuits.

Walk, run, or drive around the area. Cover all routes normally used if you take your dog for walks.

Talk *briefly* to everyone who's outside and ask if they've seen your dog. Tell them to report sightings to the animal control officer *until* fliers with *your* phone numbers are posted. Tell people not to chase your dog - you don't want it to run into the street and get hit by a car or run further away from the area.

Dogs don't like to miss out on any "fun" time with their canine friends - walk a "buddy" dog on a leash.

Always assume your dog is nearby and talk to it using familiar phrases in reassuring tones.

ASAP: Call the local animal control officer, shelter, veterinarian/s, and 24-HR. animal clinic/s.

Leave a message if no one is there to take your call. You can obtain information regarding animal control/humane officers and shelters by calling the **non-emergency** number for the police department.

A loose dog can cause a traffic accident - give the police a brief description of your dog and where it was lost or last seen. Authorities in charge of matters relating to animals have varied titles, some of which are: Animal Control Officer (ACO), Dog Warden, Humane Officer, or Dog Officer. The position can be full or part-time, and the officer may have jurisdiction in more than one town. Large cities are more apt to have several officers on staff, while rural areas may have one person in charge of the entire county.

Stay in touch with the local officer/s and shelter and share up-to-date sightings and other information.

Keep track of everyone you notify about your lost dog. Start a dated, contact list of police stations, animal control officers, shelters, vets, humane societies, rescue groups, and others of "significance." Your list should include names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and other pertinent details.

See "**FLIERS AND SIGNS**" document for detailed information.

Contact local authorities regarding ordinances that prohibit the posting of fliers or signs on utility poles.

It is not legal to put fliers inside U.S. Postal Service mailboxes (for processed or stamped mail only).

You may place (or tape) a flier anywhere *outside* of a mailbox or put it inside a newspaper bin.

Create signs using "neon poster board" (heavy paper in fluorescent colors) and a magic marker.

List basic details: Lost Dog Small Terrier Brown/White Cell Ph xxxx Home Ph xxxx

Letters and numbers should look like those on official road signs - big, **bold** and not slanted.

Signs are highly visible, easier to read than fliers, and *usually* generate more sightings.

Staple a picture flier underneath signs that are posted at key locations in search or sighting areas.

Don't post on poles that have fire alarm boxes or "sensitive" signage on them.

Create a flier using a color picture and the shortest, most exact description of your dog.

Simple fliers make it easier for people to remember key information about a missing pet.

Include descriptive details, such as: "pointy ears, white tipped tail, or was wearing red collar."

Fliers inserted in clear (not satin) sheet protectors will last longer in bad weather conditions.

See "**SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL FLIER**" – a specific design used as a handout in residential areas.

This flier has a more personal touch and provides a little insight about lost dog behavior.

Download, then *edit* the sample document to describe *your* dog and situation or create one from scratch.

ASAP! Give a color-picture, detailed-description flier to the local animal control officer, shelter, and person/s responsible for removing dead animals from roadways. If someone calls to say the dog's body was found, a guardian should make immediate arrangements to view the body. A personal and positive identification will confirm that it's the missing pet and not a similar-looking dog.

Distribute fliers to:

- Animal control officers, shelters, veterinarians, humane societies, and rescue groups.
 - Kennels, breeders, groomers, feed & grain stores, pet sitting/walking services, and pet supply stores.
 - Police, state police, and fire departments.
 - School districts - including bus drivers, athletic fields, and recreation facilities.
 - Local, state, and federal agencies that maintain roads and state highways.
 - Local, state, and national parks.
 - Utility companies - gas, electric, water, phone, and cable.
 - Bus stations, salvage yards, gas stations, churches, airports, libraries, car dealers, and laundromats.
 - U.S. Postal Service carriers, and drivers for couriers such as FED EX, UPS, and DHL.
 - Rubbish collection facilities, recycling stations, and landfills or "dumps."
 - *Every* place with a kitchen facility that cooks or serves food (restaurants, take-out, cafeterias).
- (Dogs are attracted to food odors inside trashcans, dumpsters, and rubbish holding areas.)**

Park strategically so that fliers and signs taped to the *outside* of your vehicle will be easily seen.

Pass out fliers at rabies clinics, town meetings, dog shows, church fairs, and other "social" gatherings. Put fliers under the wiper blades of vehicles located in mall, train station, and supermarket parking lots.

ASAP: Contact animal control officers, shelters, and veterinarians in *neighboring* towns.

Dogs cross town/city lines using forest trails, power lines, golf courses, parks, and fields. Shortcuts can greatly reduce travel distance and time, causing a conflict with "same-time but a mile-apart" sightings. Mark a map with advantageous routes the dog *may* be using, then compare with actual sighting locations. A lost pet can end up miles away from a search area very quickly, and for many reasons. Use current sightings *or lack of them*, as a guide when notifying shelters and vets. Reach out quickly and as far away as necessary. See if the local shelter and vet maintain a list of affiliates and if you can make a copy of it. Back up phone calls with a color-picture, full-description flier sent by mail, email, or delivered by hand. **Change the greeting message** on answering machines and cell phones to reflect the fact that you still need information about your dog. Stay in touch with everyone to let them know your search is active.

Place a picture ad in local newspapers and in "penny saver" publications – small, free and widely-read.

Post on Internet websites like www.Petfinder.com - see their "Lost" Classifieds section.

This well-known site is a great resource of information *and* has links to shelters and rescue groups.

Record passwords. If you post an ad on the Internet and want to renew, refresh, or delete it, you'll be asked for the password you created when placing the ad. Please, delete ads when you find your dog.

Search smart. Be aware of local wildlife, hunting seasons, and all *other* safety issues.

- **Always keep someone informed about your location and check in with them often.**
- **Always carry bait food**, and bring a leash, pens, and paper, cell phone and anything else of necessity.
- A street map directs you to sighting areas quickly and without question.
- A flashlight allows you to look for hiding places under buildings or in small, dark spaces and holes.
- Dress appropriately for weather conditions. **Be safe...don't venture alone** in unfamiliar territory.
- If live tracking, walk slowly and check snow, sand, or mud for prints showing the direction of travel.

Improve a dog's chances of being seen *and* found - get out of your vehicle and talk with people!

Lost dog searchers must tackle the job of knocking on doors, even if “tons” of fliers have been posted. Residents of search/sighting areas can provide critical leads, old sightings, and invaluable information.

A searcher should *never* express doubts about the lost dog's chances of survival and being found.

Don't expect strangers to be optimistic about a safe rescue if you (guardian *or* search helper) are not.

Be courteous, introduce yourself with a smile, then talk briefly so you can move on to the next home.

Go back to neighborhoods at varying hours to talk with anyone you missed on a previous visit. People need to be aware that your dog is looking for food and may be finding shelter somewhere in their yard.

Some don't realize that sighting calls let you know your pet's alive and exactly where it's been roaming.

Many will wonder why it's taking you so long to catch a dog that supposedly loves you – but won't ask.

They need to know your dog is surviving by instinct and is too confused and scared to approach anyone.

Let everyone know that your dog is still missing by maintaining fresh posts of fliers and signs.

Although lost dogs can travel fast and far in a short amount of time, many don't. Unless verified sightings prove otherwise, searchers should assume the dog is alive, very adept at hiding, and still within a reasonable proximity of the area where it was first lost. Many roam a 1 - 5 mile radius, although local conditions or “aggressive” search parties with/without dogs *may* push the dog further.

Try to lure the dog to a specific spot with food and scent items until you can set up a humane trap.

See “SIGHTING CALLS” “SEARCH TIPS” and “SPOT THE DOG” documents.

Some dogs are presumed dead but they're just not seen until shortly before they are caught – *if* someone is still looking for them. Those lost at rest stops, in parks, or in auto accidents often stay in the general area.

Dogs that bolt from anyplace other than “home” often double back to the exact spot they ran away from.

A dog can return at *any* hour, on the *same* day, or *months* later. Lost dogs constantly search for reliable sources of food, water, and shelter and often return to a location that has what they need. Provide good reasons for your dog to *want* to stay the immediate area of current sightings. **Always provide fresh food and water on a daily basis.**

Gather items with the dog's scent on it such as: sleeping crate, kennel, bedding, blanket, toys, and hair or hairbrush, then get some worn and unwashed clothing (like T-shirts) from the *person most bonded to the dog*. Place some articles outside the door most used by the dog in a spot protected from harsh weather, yet “private” and easily accessible to the dog. You can also use scent items from one of its canine friends. It's okay to dry things, but **don't wash the scent out of items.**

Fire up a BBQ - odors drift and can lure a dog to the source. If planning on setting up a humane trap, save some “good” scent (stinky bedding) to place inside. Inquire about a cage trap as soon as possible.

See “TRAPPING – HUMANE CAGE TRAPS” document.

If the dog is a new addition to your family, immediately call the rescue, foster home, shelter worker, breeder, or other former guardian to ask for assistance, scent items, and ideas. Please don't delay calling because you're embarrassed or afraid of repercussions - act responsibly by doing what's best for the dog.

A number of dogs are confused by the transition into a new home and bolt shortly upon arrival.

Never doubt a dog's intelligence or lose faith in its ability to survive the most adverse conditions.

Assume your dog is alive but still lost, has already been found, or will be found - *eventually*.

The greatest obstacle to a successful lost dog search is often the owner who gives up too soon.