



Creating Compassionate Solutions

What To Do When You Find a Cat - Think Lost Not Stray™

What is the biggest obstacle to lost cats being reunited with their owners?

“The Stray Cat Myth”

Fact: Lost cats often look thin or unkempt because they have been on their own for a while, **not** because they are homeless or neglected. Before making assumptions, do your best to find the cat’s owner.



Myth: If I post a cat as found on a couple sites, a caring owner will see it.

Fact: Many people don’t know how or where to post their cat. More than 40% of adults in the U.S. are not on Facebook. Language barriers, age and limited access to technology may prevent owners from finding your post.

1. Post the cat as found on **HeLP**. www.helpinglostpets.com. Your **Helping Lost Pets** post will be visible to anyone with Internet access and the cat will show up on their map making it easier to match local lost and found cats. Save the flyer generated as an image file so it can be posted and shared on **Craigslist**, **Nextdoor.com**, **Petharbor.com** and other sites.
 - Click on your state or province’s Facebook page for **HeLP** and share the post to your local Facebook lost pet groups.
 - Upload the flyer to Craigslist and post in both **pets** and **lost and found** sections. Use “Cat Found” in the title. Make the **HeLP** flyer the **first** photo so people will have your contact info on shares.
2. If possible, keep the cat indoors. Ask neighbors if they recognize the cat.
3. **Notify all shelters ASAP**. Include shelters in nearby towns in case the pet traveled. Post online and in the **Found Cat** binder within the shelter.
4. Have the cat scanned for a microchip. This is free at vets and shelters.
5. Post neon **Cat Found** posters in visible locations . Use sheet protectors.
6. Post flyers at coffee shops, vets (www.webvet.com) rescues & stores.

Myth: I haven’t found the cat’s owner this week so I need to find it a home.

Fact: It can often take 2 – 6 weeks or more to find a lost pet’s owner. Why?

- The owner may not know the steps needed to recover a lost pet.
- The cat may have been transported out of the area either accidentally or on purpose. Trap and dump is unfortunately a common occurrence. As a result, the owner isn’t looking in the area where you found it.
- Lost cats often hide or are difficult to catch. This means that by the time the cat is comfortable enough to allow handling or is caught in a live trap, he may have been missing for weeks, months or even years.
- The owner may have lost hope and given up due to a mistaken belief that the cat was stolen or taken by a predator.

Never rehome an animal unless you have exhausted all efforts to find the owner. If you have not posted the animal as found at all local shelters and followed all the steps to find the owner, you may be giving away a loved pet. Laws vary, but some counties require as long as 30 days before rehoming. If you need help finding the owner, please ask for assistance. Volunteers on lost pet pages are often happy to help if you make a direct request for help in posting, sharing and identifying local lost and found cat resources.

Links: www.communitycatcoalitionwa.org

<https://www.missinganimalresponse.com/>™ “Think Lost Not Stray”