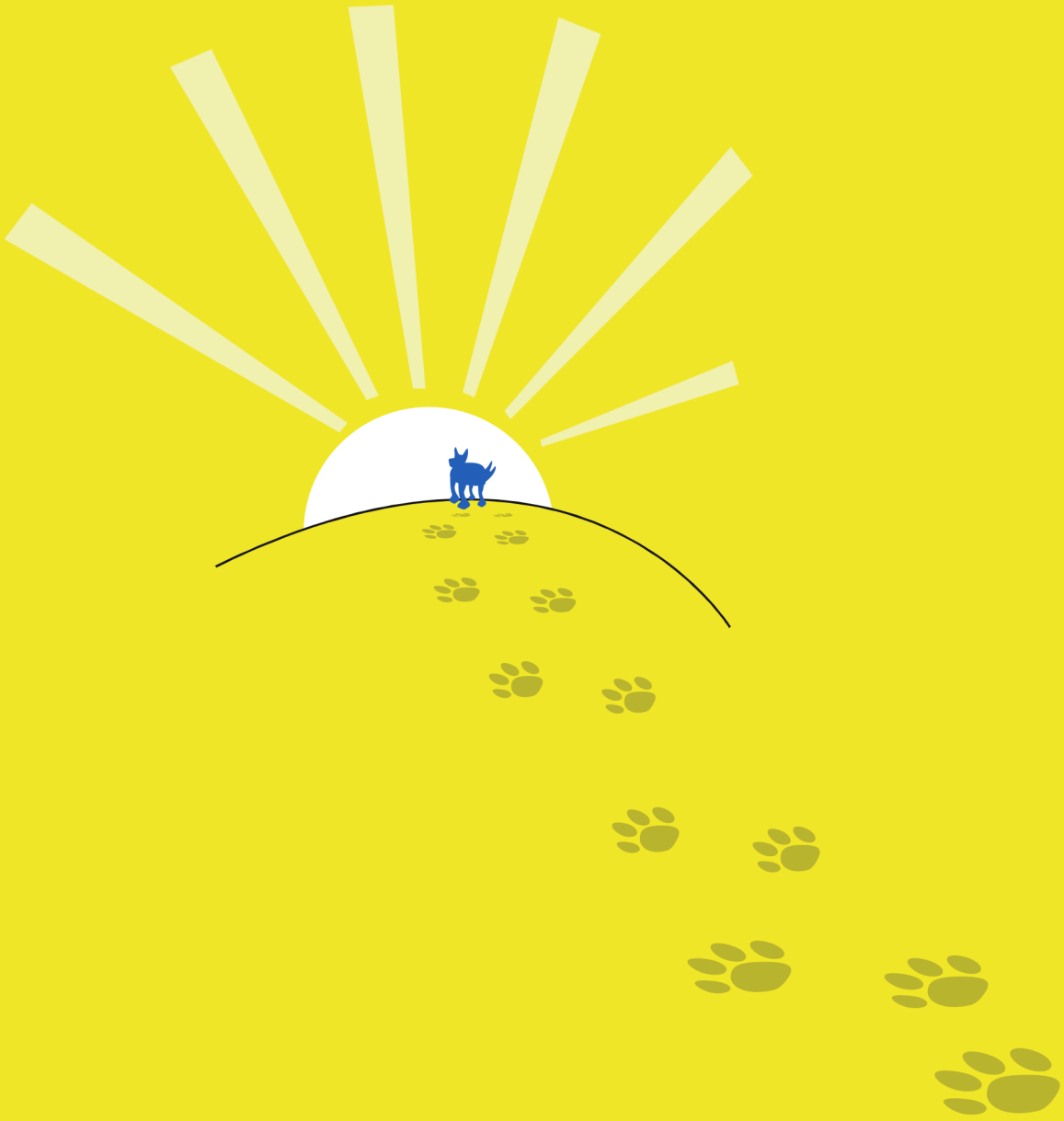
What to do if
Your Dog Becomes Lost
or Goes Astray



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What to Do if Your Dog Becomes Lost or Goes Astray

Having your dog go missing is a time of great heartache and distress. Your dog may be hiding somewhere cowering with fear, or she may be off on the adventure of a lifetime. Either way, there are many dangers out in the community for a dog at large. She could get hit by a car or get into a fight with another dog. She might get injured from a fall or trapped in a small place.

For your dog's sake and yours, it is important to be diligent in keeping your dog safe, whether it is in the house, in the backyard or out on a walk on-leash.

How Did Your Dog Escape?

Did he dig under the fence or chew through it? Did she jump or climb over the fence? Did he sneak through an open gate or door? Did she chew through his leash? Did he pull away from you while out on a walk?

Knowing how your dog escaped can help you understand why he left.

Why Do Dogs Escape?

Opportunistic Journey: When a gate or door is left open, most dogs will leap at the chance to go out and explore the world. Although they may not be actively trying to escape, their noses just lead them out of their yard on a freedom-filled journey that could take them blocks or even kilometres from home.

Wanderlust: Male dogs that haven't been neutered will often go to great lengths to find a female in heat. They will actively try to escape their yards, and may bolt out a door or pull away from the owner while out on a walk.

Separation Anxiety: Many dogs become anxious when left alone. Those left in yards may try to escape. In most cases, dogs who escape for this reason don't wander far, and are often found sitting on the front porch when the owner comes home.

Fear: Dogs often escape when they become frightened by something. Thunderstorms, firecrackers, cars back-firing, garbage trucks, sirens and gunshots are noises that commonly frighten dogs. These dogs are hard to catch because they will travel large distances quickly, and avoid human contact – even with their own family.

Boredom: Dogs will escape if they are bored. These dogs typically don't get enough exercise, stimulation or playtime and there is a world of adventure waiting for them just on the other side of the fence – great smells to investigate, people to meet, other dogs to play with and lots of exercise.

Innate Characteristics: Some dogs are built to run and will take advantage of any opportunity to do so. Others have a huge prey drive, so if they see a bunny speeding by, the dog will take off.



How Far Will Your Dog Go?

Weather: Dogs are more likely to travel greater distances in nice weather. Snow, hail, rain or extreme heat will slow your dog down.

Landscape: A dog who escapes in a residential area won't tend to travel as far as a dog who escapes in the countryside because there are more fences and barriers in residential areas to get in the way. The terrain (e.g. cliffs, heavy brush) will also influence your dog's travel path, as most dogs will follow the path of least resistance on their journey.

Population Density: Areas with lots of people will increase the chances of your dog being found nearby because it is more likely to be sighted or picked up by someone.

Reason for Escape: If your dog ran away out of fear, it may run blindly for several kilometres before looking for a place to hide. If your dog got loose to follow a scent, it may be found closer to home still happily sniffing away.

Appearance of the Dog: Purebreds, smaller dogs and "friendly-looking" dogs tend to get picked up by rescuers sooner.

Dog's Personality: Fearful or aloof dogs are more likely to avoid people and hide out somewhere. An outgoing dog has a higher chance of being found closer to home because it will probably seek out the attention of a passerby.

Effective Search Tactics: Action Plan

Never Give Up
It could take hours or days, or sometimes even weeks or months, to find your dog, but don't give up hope. There have been some amazing stories of lost dogs being reunited with their families after months of searching.

It Starts at Home
Check with members of your household. Maybe Dad has taken him to the park, or perhaps Little Johnny saw him in clothes basket in the laundry room.

Search your home and property thoroughly. Check closets, behind furniture, under decks, etc. Dogs can fit in small spaces.



Talk to Your Neighbours
Start knocking on doors. Ask your neighbours to be on the look out for your dog, and with their permission, check their properties carefully for areas where your dog could be trapped or injured.

Ask for Help
If you don't find your dog quickly, ask your friends and family for help. You can't search effectively on your own.

Give each person a clear task: Some could be helping create posters and fliers, while others are creating a list of organizations to visit. Still others can be involved in searching the neighbourhood, talking to people, handing out fliers and putting up posters.

Make sure that your searchers have a well-defined area that they are responsible for. Ask them each to carry a cell phone.

Make noise while you walk around by calling your dog's name in a kind voice, squeaking a toy, shaking a kibble bag, etc. Bring a tasty treat, harness, leash to secure your pet.

Fliers and Posters
Create and print fliers with a recent colour photo of your dog – preferably a full-bodied close-up of your dog in a standing position. On the flier, you should also include information about the dog's name, breed, age, weight, colouring, sex, collar, tags, and microchip.

In case you are on the other line when a call comes through, you should change the voicemail message. Be sure to include information about your lost dog. Also ask the caller to leave information such as the date, time and exact location of the sighting, as well as the caller's name and number in case of questions.

Create "lost dog" posters using bright, florescent bristol board and a giant, black magic marker. Focus on important details. Fewer words and large print maximize impact. Don't distract the eye with fancy graphics or borders. Paste your flier in the middle of the poster.



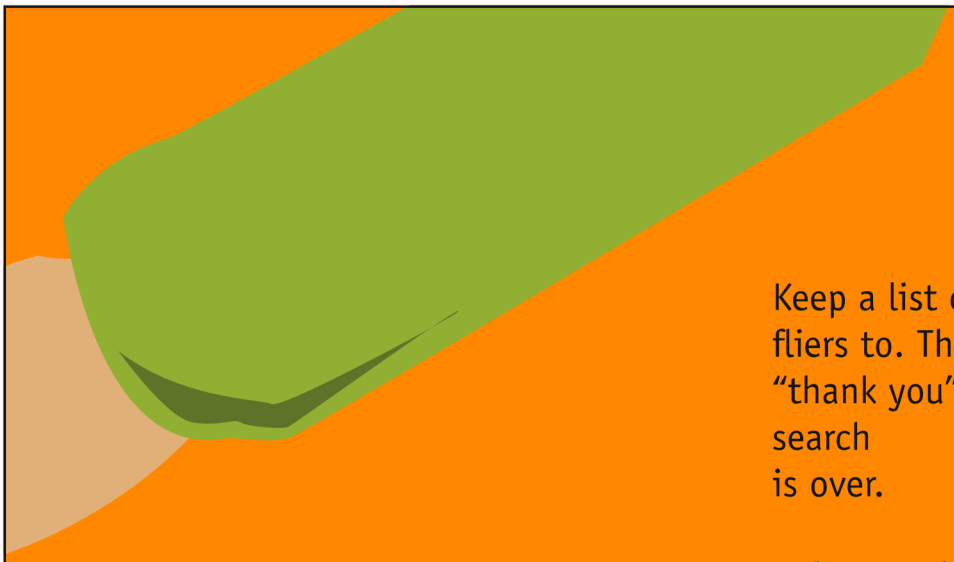


Poster and Flier Distribution

Door to Door

Make it a priority to talk to all residents in the search or sighting area. These people are an excellent source of new leads – they may have seen your dog, but not called to report it. Leave a flier with each person you meet. If no one is home, leave a flier in their mailbox.

It is also important to talk to people who are frequently in your neighbourhood, such as school kids, postal workers, newspaper carriers, school bus drivers, etc. (This is time consuming but worth it.)



Organization to Organization
Immediately give a flier to all local Animal Control officers, shelters, rescue organizations and veterinary hospitals and clinics. Visit these organizations personally as often as possible. Staff may not recognize your pet based on the photo or description you've provided.

Fliers can also be put up or distributed to local gas stations, stores, post offices, parks, school grounds, road crews, construction crews, utility companies. You can hand out fliers at local events and put fliers under the wiper blades of cars in parking lots.

Distribute fliers to everyone involved with dogs on a regular basis such as veterinarian hospitals and clinics, kennels, breeders, groomers, dog daycare, pet stores, pet sitters, dog trainers, police and fire departments.

Keep a list of who you've distributed fliers to. This will help make the "thank you" process easier when your search
is over.

Pole to Pole
When putting up your "lost dog" posters in the area of disappearance or a sighting, carefully choose utility poles that are easily seen by both vehicle traffic and pedestrians.

Newspaper to Internet
Place an ad in your local newspaper and check the "found" ads everyday. Some strays are eventually posted on www.petfinder.com and other similar websites.

Size of Search Area
In most cases, dogs do not go a distance further than three kilometres. An eight-kilometre radius from the point of disappearance is a maximum in the great majority of cases, so limit your search to the local area and just keep at it.

Highly populated areas might mean that a smaller radius is sufficient, whereas a rural area might require a larger area.



Think Like a Dog

When searching, it's important to think like a dog.

Dogs tend to hang around residential areas where water, food, and places to shelter are easier to find. The yards most visited are ones that provide those basics – and remind them of home.

With a little luck, dogs can find bowls of water and kibble left outside for pets of local residents. Attracted to the scent of farm animals, dogs might also find water, food and a comfy bed at a farm. Lost dogs are not picky though – other sources of water, food and shelter could be:

Water - Streams, lakes, ponds, puddles, water gardens and kids' pools.

Food - Food wrappers, rodents, birds, snakes, birdseed, acorns, manure, insects and road kill.

Shelter – This will depend on the weather conditions, but could be doghouses, decks, old cars, bushes, trailers, piles of debris, carports, sheds and open barns. Vacant houses are also great because no one is ever home to disturb them.

Dogs sometimes play with friendly dogs that are chained up, fenced in or loose and running around.





Lay a Scent Trail

Dogs love shortcuts because it is a faster way to get somewhere, and they won't be noticed by the residents or their dogs. Shortcuts are fast, convenient and used frequently by stray dogs. They can be golf courses, parking lots, gravel pits, bridal trails, pastures, recreational fields, parks, and cemeteries.

Dogs favour homes adjacent to woodlands on dead end streets, cul de sacs, and at the rear of subdivisions.

Dogs are attracted by odours that you don't smell and repeatedly visit dumpsters and rubbish holding areas. Visit all fast food establishments, restaurants, picnic areas, campgrounds, amusement parks, convenience stores, etc. Stop by every establishment with a kitchen facility. Talk to the person who discards trash and leftovers.

Walking or riding a bicycle helps lay down a scent trail that your dog may be able to detect. Cover at least a kilometre in all directions. The early morning and late evening hours are best.

Try placing a recently worn piece of clothing outside. Animals have a keen sense of smell and familiar smells can bring them home.

Sightings

It's important to keep a record of all sightings and track a dog's travels on a map until the search is over. Be sure to take detailed notes when speaking with someone who has spotted your dog. Get to the area immediately. Bring food, a leash and collar and fliers.

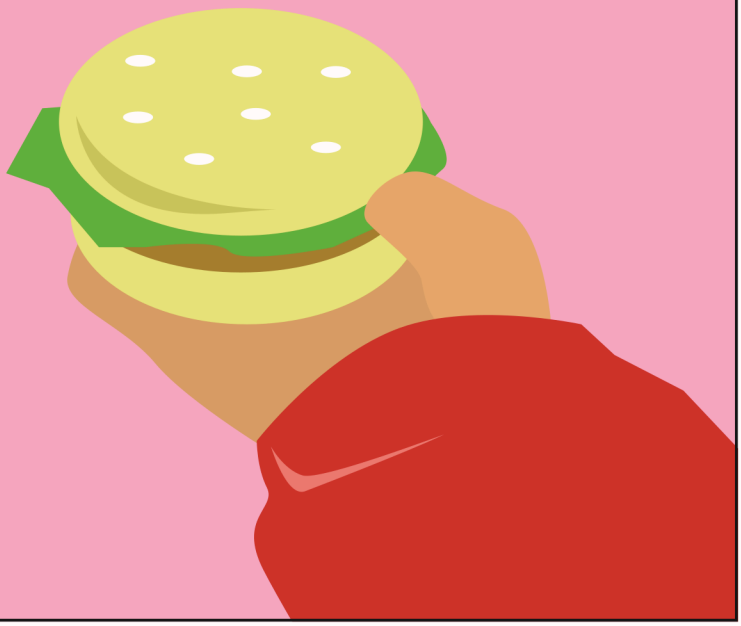
At the sighting location, put something smelly out that your dog will be drawn to. One of the best things to use is tripe, which is the unwashed, uncooked content of one of the cow's stomachs.

It can be found at some butcher's and in some markets. Check the Internet for places that carry it. Also, place some of your unwashed articles of clothing at the location.

Slowly walk in the area your dog was seen, gently calling your dog's name. Most searchers drive too much and walk too fast.

Don't be discouraged by the infrequency or lack of sightings – there are never enough until a dog is found.





You see your dog. Now what?

The golden rule here is: Never chase your dog! It will either run away because it is still frightened and stressed, or it will run away because it thinks it's a game. So, don't chase it.

Don't

- Don't yell or run directly at your dog. This could cause your dog to run further away.
- Never punish your dog.
- Don't show your teeth if you smile – this is baring your teeth in dog language.
- Don't stare at a dog – this is seen as a challenge.
- Avoid sudden movements.
- Stop moving and slowly lower yourself to the ground if it looks like the dog is going to take off.
- Don't overfeed a lost dog – it will have less reason to come to you.
- Don't run out of food – you must have something to offer the dog.

Do

- Stay calm.
- Facing a bit to the side, very slowly approach your dog in an arc – not a direct line.
- If it looks like the dog might bolt, very gently lower yourself to the ground, assuming a non-threatening position. Make sure you are below the dog's eye level and turn away from him slightly.
- Talk in a gentle, reassuring tone, calling his name encouragingly.
- Try luring the dog to you by offering nice, smelly treats.
- If that doesn't work, you can get her attention, and then run away from her to entice her to follow you. When the dog catches up, lower yourself to the ground and reach under for its collar.
- If you're dog is trained, it might respond to commands like "come," "sit" or "stay."
- Praise your dog if she comes to you. You are rewarding her for coming, not escaping.

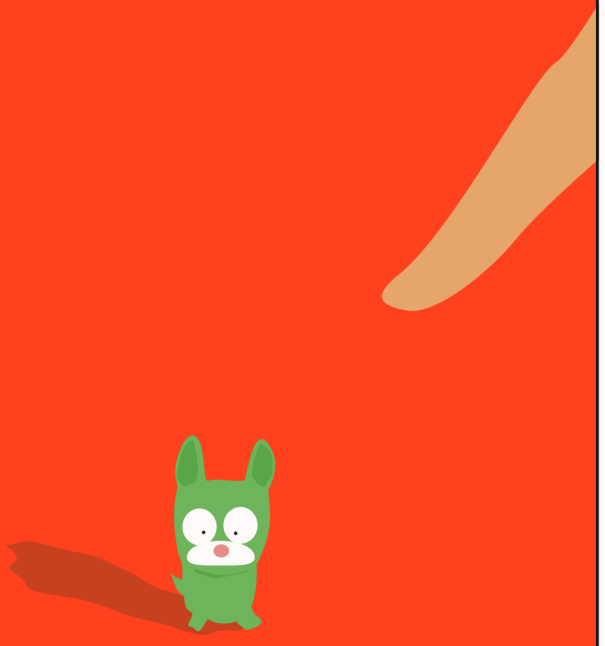
You've got your dog back! Now what?

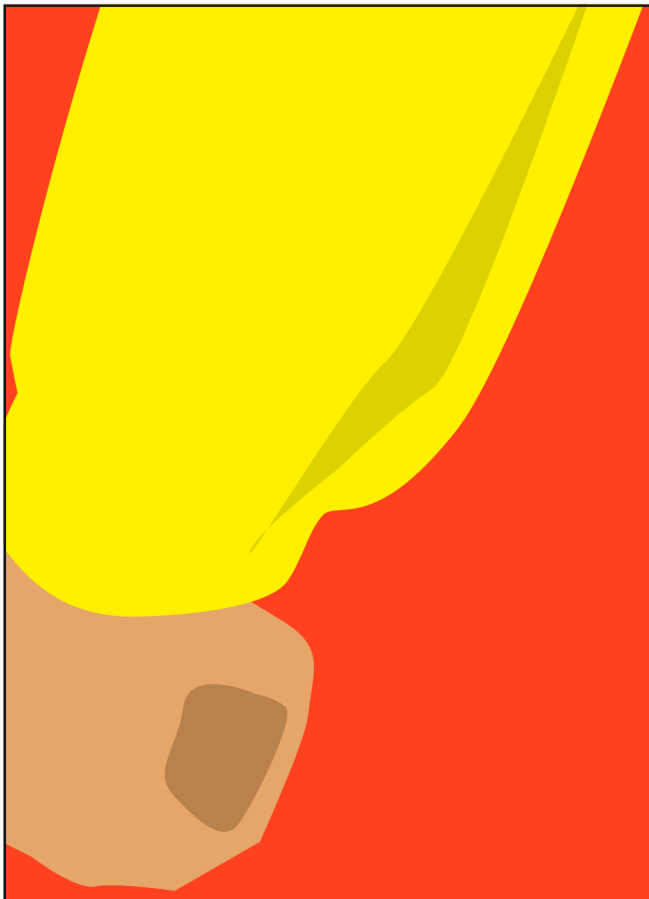
1. Don't give your dog unlimited amounts of food or water. This could have serious health consequences.

2. Take your dog to a veterinarian or 24-hour clinic immediately to be checked out.

3. Once you're back home, monitor your dog's health and let your vet know if there are any changes. Make sure your dog gets the time it needs to rest and recuperate.

4. Phone all of the people and organizations you contacted to say "thank you." Remove all posters and fliers from public places. Go on the Internet and delete any posts you made to websites for lost pets.





Appropriate Punishment

Never try to punish your dog after she is already out of the yard. Dogs associate punishment with what they are doing at the time. They won't understand that they are being punished for running away. The important thing to remember is that you got your dog back.

If you catch your dog in the act of escaping, a firm "No" is appropriate – anything more and you will have an even bigger problem the next time. She will have learned not to come to you because "bad things" will happen to her. So then you not only have a dog who escapes, but you have one that you can't catch after she's out.

You must also give your dog less reason to escape and make it more difficult to do so as discussed before.

Preventing Escape

A secure fence is essential. Fix any loose boards or holes. Bury some chicken wire or large rocks at the bottom if you dog likes to dig. If your dog is a climber or a jumper, make your fence taller, or add a section to the top that leans inwards at a 45 degree angle. Make sure the fence is such though that your dog can't get caught at the top of the fence.

Chaining your dog is not a good option – it doesn't give the dog sufficient opportunity for exercise and play, and can be dangerous if done improperly.

It's important to also decrease your dog's desire to escape. If your dog is trying to escape due to fear, you must work on decreasing that fear. If your dog has separation anxiety, you must help teach your dog how to be calm and unafraid when you are gone. Neutering your dog will significantly decrease your dog's desire to roam.



Give your dog plenty of fun things to do. If your dog has more fun outside her yard than in it, she will continue to try to escape. Provide toys, regular exercise, play time, attention and variation.

"To encourage your dog to play by herself in the yard try: a large, beach-ball size ball made of hard plastic which the dog can push around with her nose, 2) tying a tug-toy onto a pole or fence, 3)a toy on a pulley which will dangle, or 4) a Kong toy stuffed with tidbits of food. Try spending more time with your dog: play fetch, take her for walks, let her have more time inside the house, and/or enrol her in an obedience class."(Animal Humane Society)




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Loss Prevention is Key

A Little Bit of Prevention Goes a Long Way to Keep Your Dog Safe:

1. Your dog should always wear a collar with its identification tags, even if it is inside the home.

2. Have your dog microchipped and/or tattooed for permanent identification.

3. Spay or neuter your pet.

4. Keep your dog on a leash when outside the home.

5. Properly secure the fencing on your property.

6. Check leashes and cable runs often and replace right away if they are looking worn or frayed.

7. Keep doors and gates firmly secured, especially when kids and tradespeople are coming and going.

8. Keep an eye on your dog when it is in the yard, especially if there are big noise events taking place.

9. Make the backyard more exciting to your dog by giving him toys to play with and by spending time together playing fun, cooperative games.

10. Use positive training to increase your dog's chances of responding to your request to "come."

11. Prepare a lost pet kit in advance with some up-to-date photos and posters so you can act quickly if needed.

What to do if you find a stray

Safety First:

- Frightened or sick dogs may behave unpredictably. If you feel uneasy in any way, contact your local SPCA.
- If the dog appears approachable, use caution and common sense.

Look For Identification:

- Dog tags may have the animal's home number on them. If they just have a municipal number on them, call your local SPCA and they should be able to help you track down where the owners live. If here are no tags, you can take the dog to a vet or the SPCA to have the dog checked for a tattoo or microchip.

If the Dog has no Identification:

- Contact your local SPCA or Humane Society to report a found dog. If you are willing and able, let them know that you are happy to care for the dog until the owners are found.
- Talk to people in the neighbourhood where you found the dog. Kids and other dog owners are often great sources of information.
- Put up "Found Pet" posters.
- Check the "Lost" section in the Classifieds.
- Visit websites like **www.petfinder.org.**



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