🐾 IMPORTANT INFORMATION IF YOUR DOG IS MISSING/LOST 🐾

Losing a beloved pet can be an incredibly stressful experience. We understand that your pets are more than just animals; they're part of your family. When your furry friend goes missing, it's essential to follow the right steps to ensure their safe return. Here is information to help you take the right steps to bring them back home safely.

- Stay Calm: Although it's a stressful situation, try to remain calm. Your dog is also frightened and on an unfamiliar adventure. For lost dogs, it's a "fight or flight" response, and most will choose flight. To them, you may appear as a predator, not their loving owner. Understanding this concept is crucial.
- Time and Distance: Determine how long your pet has been missing and how far the last sighting was from your home.
- Sweep the Neighborhood
    - You may also want to bring an extra special treat or his favorite food in order to help use his sense of smell to lure him home. Sometimes leaving your dog's bedding or some clothing with your scent by the location where your pet went missing will help him find his way back.
    - You may also want to alert your neighbors or people in the area of where your dog went missing and instruct them on how to approach your dog when spotted. Be sure to share her name and photos so that everyone in the general vicinity of your home (or wherever your dog went missing) knows exactly who they're looking for. If you have other dogs, be sure to recruit them, too—their powerful noses may be all you need to help lead you to the direction where their best bud is currently hiding.
- Contact Authorities: Reach out to the police, animal control, and ALL local shelters immediately if you haven't already. They can assist in your search efforts.
- Check for Identification: Is your pet microchipped or wearing a collar with ID tags? Contact the microchip company to ensure your information is up-to-date and let them know your pet is missing.
- Utilize Social Media: Share pictures and important information about your missing pet on all "lost and found" platforms and local community groups, including surrounding areas. Don't forget to keep them updated when your pet is found and safely returned home.
- Create Flyers: Design and distribute eye-catching color flyers with a clear photo and contact information. Post them in your community ASAP. Don't forget to take them down when your dog is found.
- Security Cameras: If you have security cameras, position the food within their line of vision. Ask neighbors to check their security cameras as well.

- Visit Shelters: Regularly visit local shelters in person and provide them with a flyer. Don't forget to keep them updated when your pet is found and safely returned home. Walk the shelter to view every dog.

One crucial piece of advice we'd like to share is this: LURE lost or stray dogs, DO NOT CHASE after them.

But what does "DO NOT CHASE" mean, exactly? Often, when pets escape or go missing, our natural instinct is to call their name and pursue them. Some may organize search parties, utilizing cars, quads, ATVs, or UTVs to track them down. However, all these actions fall under the "DO NOT CHASE" rule. Chasing a lost dog includes any forward movement towards the dog, even taking one step can be perceived as chasing in the dog's mind. Dogs have exceptional hearing, so the sound of a motor vehicle can scare them away long before you reach them.

If you are a pet owner, a concerned citizen, or a member of law enforcement following a dog around in a vehicle, you are effectively chasing the dog. Speeding after a roaming dog only causes them to run further and faster, making it challenging to capture them. Unlike apprehending a criminal, this approach doesn't work for lost or stray dogs.

So, how can you help in the right way? If your pet is still in sight after running away, here's what you should do:

- Create a Scent Trail: Place food and water outside your home, using strong-smelling food like cooked hot dogs or chicken. Add items with your scent on them, such as unwashed clothing. You can even create a scent trail with liquid smoke or Worcestershire sauce leading from your property to the food source.
- Grill Up Goodness: If possible, fire up the grill and cook something enticing to help your pet follow their nose back home.

If you see/find your dog or a lost dog in your community, here are some helpful tips if the dog does not come running to you. Once the dog is near you, start LURING them back to you, using gentle and encouraging methods to ensure their safe return.

- Slow Approach: Get low or lie flat on the ground to appear less threatening. Avoid direct eye contact and speak softly with a soothing tone.
- No Reaching: Do not reach out for your dog. Allow them to approach you first, and if they come close, let them make contact. Some skittish dogs may need multiple touches before feeling comfortable.
- Be Patient: Give your dog time to recognize your voice and scent. Let them come to you when they feel safe.

We hope these steps lead to a joyful reunion with your furry family member. Remember to stay vigilant and never give up hope.

Don't Give Up

No matter what, keep looking. It's a terrifying, heartbreaking experience to lose a four-legged member of your family, and even if a few days—or even weeks—have gone by, keep in mind that though your dog may be accustomed to sleeping on a plush dog bed and eating out of a fancy dog dish, most dogs will become very resourceful and rely on their instincts to survive when they're out on their own. In the meantime, remain diligent and persistent and continue sharing, posting, and searching until your beloved pooch is back in your arms.

SHELTERS SERVICING MERCER COUNTY, NJ

The Trenton Animal Shelter
72 Escher St, Trenton, NJ 08609
(609) 989-3254

Hamilton Township Animal Shelter
2100 Sylvan Ave, Hamilton, NJ 08610
(609) 890-3550

Ewing Township Animal Shelter (EASEL)
4 Jake Garzio Dr, Ewing, NJ 08628
(609) 883-0540

SAVE – (Impoundment facility for municipalities local to Trenton)
1010 Rte 601, Skillman, NJ 08558
(609) 309-5214