

C4P ANIMAL RESCUE: Canada's Animal Advocacy Network
Amber Alerts for Lost Pets
www.C4PANIMALRESCUE.com

C4P ANIMAL RESCUE is pleased to provide the following best practices for Amber Alerts for Lost Pets.

Roughly 10,000 pets go missing in the greater Toronto area each year. And they are only the ones that are reported. 65% make it home. The Amber Alert for Lost Pets is designed to work with and educate the family on preventative measures, as well as reach as many citizens as possible with best practices when a pet goes missing.

While in certain cases the rescue community will partner with the owner/guardian and support in a search, these guidelines have been developed to help the average citizen recover a lost pet, by enlisting the help of their families, friends and neighbours. If C4P gets involved, we support by posting in our weekly Sunday newsletter, as well as by determining who on our list can/will help, making an overall plan for recovery, and deploying or organizing rescuers/volunteers as needed.

This list is comprehensive – and we hope, not overwhelming. This list is for the owner/guardians who will do anything and everything to recover their treasured family member.

PREVENTION IS KEY!

- Do not leave pets tied up in public places, even for a minute. They get stolen, or, they can get spooked by a noise or person, get themselves loose, and run.
- “Terms of Adoption” should include **never leaving animals unattended outside** to prevent kidnappings, as well as a requirement for notifying rescue immediately if pet goes missing.
- Print C4P Amber Alerts for Lost Pets info and provide to new guardian on adoption.
- Use extra caution and secure pets when storms are coming / “firecracker” nights.
- Don't leave pets unattended in back yards – they are prey to large birds and coyotes.

- Have a recent picture on hand, including size relationship (beside a person or object). [UAN \(United Animal Nations suggest takings a photo of yourself WITH your pet\(s\) and having it on hand so you can prove that pet really is yours \(if the animal isn't microchipped, etc\).](#)
- Always have visible identification on your pet in form of name tag with your direct phone numbers and also city license tag - you may eventually need the City's help!
- Always have a back up microchip – and make sure the issuing company has updated information every year. Consider leaving chip info in the rescue's name, with secondary emergency contact info, not in adopter's name.
- Make sure pets' collar and/or harness is snug and cannot slip over its head.
- Make sure there are no holes under fence; that fences are in good repair and there is nothing against the fence that a dog can jump onto, and then over the fence.
- With rescues, take them out into yard on leash for the first couple of weeks to ensure they are comfortable. Gradually increase their knowledge of their new neighbourhoods, but keep them on leash until you are absolutely certain they are under “voice control”.
- Because some of rescues tried to bolt out the door when first brought home, keep the leash attached to them for up to a week. That way if they do get out, there is a leash for someone to grab if they can get close enough. And just as important is if they do get

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away, a dog at large with a leash attached is going to be noticed so reports of the dog will come in much sooner and you will know that it is your rescue.

- When adopting dogs out, make every effort to familiarize them to the new area before they go there permanently.
- Use management measures to ensure pet doesn't bolt through door (baby gates, tethers, crates, leashes).
- Teach "sit stays" at the door, to habituate pet to not react negatively or impulsively to an open door.
- When walking your (new) dog, have a really good grip on the leash (your hand through the loop and holding on), in case dog bolts.
- Have a list of sources for live traps and their sizes so you know where to get them quickly.
- Maintain a list of vet clinics (address, telephone number, email, fax) by area.
- Eventually, you will need to go on vacation, be away from your pet. Plan in advance how this will play out. Acclimatize them to a local kennel, or, acclimatize them to your mother in law's place – wherever you are going to place them temporarily, make sure it is not an "unknown" and therefore threatening environment.
- Consider a GPS dog-tracking collar. System is designed for pet owners to quickly and accurately locate their pets by using GPS technology. It consists of a portable, handheld receiver that displays information received from the GPS-enabled collar on your dog. The handheld device uses a LCD screen to show the location and direction of your pet every few seconds and shows you the dog's current movements. Some GPS Collar Tracking Systems can also be used to set up an invisible fence. When your pet breaks the barrier the GPS Dog Collar Tracking System will send you an audible alert. This invention is a real savior for owners of those escape artists! Websites for reference:
www.garmin.com/products/astro
www.mydogtrackingcollars.com

HOW TO RECOVER YOUR LOST PET: MOVE, MOVE FAST, MOVE BIG!!!

The objective is to obtain a sighting: Any sightings need to be recorded when and where, which direction pet is traveling in. Trick is to know their pattern, they WILL have a pattern. You need to show up there once you know their routine ...start leaving food and shelter ... and set a trap.

The two mistakes most often made are not looking long enough or far enough.

Be sure you have an answering machine or phone is manned, and encourage callers to convey their telephone numbers clearly, date and time and location of sighting.

Immediate Action Items / Rescue Group Communications:

- Maintain a core email "rescue" group
- Stick to point form – facts only.
- Create a list of all involved – full names, cell numbers, email addresses, general location, noting anyone in particular who lives close to the area concerned and copy all team members.

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- Assign a group leader, who works directly with the family involved.
- Encourage everyone not to "comment on comments" (emails can be quite overwhelming)
- Secure a live trap (wildlife centers, local humane societies, local wildlife removal services) just in case.

Immediate Action Items / Flyers

- Obtain all details for poster including: breed, sex, size, FULL contact information, ie., home phone, email, cell phone, address, cross streets/area gone missing, include 2-3 phone numbers/contacts in bold, recent photo, and advise to call 24/7. Stick "REWARD" at the top!!!! (While jury is out on subject of rewards, money talks, and always has. It may bring out crazies but may also bring out people who need money and have time to scout.)
- Communicate what motivates the pet/"the style".
- Ensure poster states: DO NOT CHASE, animal will run harder - call in sighting only.
- Print two flyers per 8 ½ x 11 page, side by side, using brightest background color possible. Black on white does not stand out. Consider using legal sized paper, printing 3 flyers per page ... saves \$, greater reach!

Immediate Action Items / Social Networks

- Set up Facebook, Craig's List, Yahoo Groups, Kijiji, Toronto.com, The Eye, Torontoist, listings, and post everywhere on Twitter - on first day animal goes missing.
- Ask friends to post on their Facebook animal groups, Facebook profiles, individual websites
- Check Kijiji and Craig's list ads looking for any postings on animals
- Email, cross-posting to as many people as you know and ask them to forward far and wide.
- Update Facebook pages as often as possible, ensuring continued awareness and buy in.
- Post to any breed-specific rescue groups or "umbrella organizations" (like C4P), and ask them to post to volunteers/community groups.

Community Outreach:

- Put posters up immediately in plastic folders (opening at the bottom so rain can't get in) - use thumb tacks, staples or packing tape, and wrap tape around poles for greater stick factor.
- Post in high traffic areas: coffee shops, fast food outlets, convenience stores, ATMs, local businesses, local restaurants, police stations, fire stations, public works stations.
- Report the lost pet to the charity/agency/shelter/rescue concerned.
- Advise municipal/local animal control e.g., Toronto Animal Services, Toronto Humane Society, Etobicoke Humane, Mississauga Animal Control.
 - Go to the local animal shelters and do physical checks. Don't take what they say on the phone as they are very busy, and as good as they are, sometimes the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. Go check the runs and the books yourself every day. Talk to the staff and make sure there aren't other rescues, animal control, pounds and/or SPCA shelters you don't know about.
- Complete "lost reports" and have one regular volunteer call daily to check if pet has been reported "found" at one of the shelters. Note: dispatch doesn't always know what's happening at the actual shelters.
- Check/ask if there are any "cadaver reports".

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- Call every shelter around, and further regional ones.
- Remember, some person could have the pet and dump them later - notify all pounds in and beyond area. Pounds only have to keep a dog 72 hours, then can sell to research or destroy.

- Call or fax all local vets and offer to pay for care if he is brought in, leave your #s ...otherwise an injured, unidentified pet could be euthanized if they can't trace it.
- Send flyers to "Veterinary Purchasing", a veterinary supply company, who can distribute flyers to all of their veterinary clients in the area code regions: 416, 905 and 519. There is no (current) charge by Vet Purchasing, just the cost of the flyers (2 per page size: about \$300)
- Local vets (research area - fax flyer to vet offices)

- Local doggie daycares (dogs are often brought to local day cares when found).
- Local dog walkers (people often bring strays to them when they don't know what to do)
- Contact dog walkers in the area and give them a poster/flyer – they are out during the day and can help search. They may be able to suggest local 'hiding places' too.
- Note to readers: Project Pet Rescue Toronto is researching / compiling a list of all dog walkers in Toronto. Once complete, we will be able to "text" lost pet messages to them immediately. Other municipalities/cities/towns are encouraged to develop a list of their own too!

- Secondary schools, primarily Principals / Guidance offices, in hopes of announcements as well as for possible volunteer assistance from students.
- Enlist help of neighborhood kids, who spot dogs much more than adults. Kids love cash.
- If you're a member of Freecycle, post a 'WANTED: information' ad. The Etobicoke group has over 1000 members so it's a great way to reach a lot of people at one time.
- Post in local area groups: community centers, ratepayers and tenants' associations, homeowner groups, animal groomers, trainers, civic associations, youth groups, artists groups, churches, local constituency offices of MPs and MPPs, local Councilors, online pet related sites, community organizations, golf courses, etc.
- Advise/poster local Police – ask for "Communications" or "Dispatch"
- Advise/poster local Fire and Paramedic stations.
- Advise local cab companies, enlist the aid of their drivers. Especially early morning drivers.
- Alert regional mass transit ie., Go Transit (pr@gotransit.com)
- Alert local public transit, ie., Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) or local area transit.
- Contact homeless shelters in area and put some of their worthy constituents to work on the streets! <http://www.toronto.ca/housing/sock/see.htm>
- Check area animal went missing for stores with video cameras. You may get lucky!
- Check "free to good home" newspaper ads.

Walking "Foot Soldiers" & Drivers

Dogs generally stay in and travel a 12 block area unless they are spooked or chased or taken, but do poster and search beyond as well since on many occasions where dogs have been spooked OR chased, they have ended up farther away.

Cats typically take shelter and hide, locally. Think of their patterns – where do they like to go? Look in trouble/danger areas – any construction? Abandoned places? Broken windows?

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Sewers, tunnels, under porches, in basements, abandoned houses/sheds, TREES?

- Appoint a group leader for foot searches and a communications leader for emails.
- The more people you round up, the better. You need an army.
- Obtain maps from the search area over the internet; save maps as PDFs; issue to group; divide up the work. Initially, go beyond the search area and work your way "in".
 - Map out areas and have volunteers walk blocks in neighborhoods dropping off a lost pet flyer in residential mailboxes, ensuring people have flyers on hand.

- Look: under decks, in back yards, garden sheds, garages, behind local restaurants, especially unsecured grease bins. BTW, if you find an unsecured grease bin, call the Board of Health! Wildlife drown in unsecured grease vats all the time!

- Travel in teams of two – one driver, one surveillance person.
- Dawn/daytime are the most likely times for pets to forage; at dusk, they are looking for - - Guide efforts of all foot soldiers to avoid redundancies.
- *Go out at night, and call pet's name, kindly and firmly, not in a panicked state. Use the same voice you would use if you were praising your dog. Key is to avoid making the dog think that he/she is in trouble as he/she may not then come to you. Bring another dog they like, if there is a dog companion in the household that they are bonded to.
- *Take a flashlight with you.
- *Check sewers any local construction sites where an animal could get trapped.
- Speak to the mail carriers, early morning newspaper deliverers, bus drivers. They notice things; they talk to people/each other.
 - *Talk to all the neighbors, within a mile radius (that's a lot of houses, but you need to do this) – engage your entire family and circle of friends.
- Put plywood signs at intersections with REWARD, PET, PHONE #.

- Bus stops (bear in mind municipal workers take posters down)(City of Toronto can force you to take them down and/or issue a fine)
- Place flyers on windshields of cars at neighbourhood grocery stores. Local people have to eat. Poster grocery stores first, then perhaps malls or local strip malls.
- Consider a Canada Post drop to reach the entire area in one fell swoop (find out how to do this and how much it costs now so you have the info ready).
- Use a postering company ... this is different from the one that sends to people's houses. They put up posters all around area:
<http://www.outdoorpostering.ca/>
<http://www.allpostering.com/>

- If the routine/pattern they establish is shot because the dog is spooked and s/he moves to yet another area (usually 3 blocks or so) and you have to get sightings again and find the routine all over again. "tell the party to stake out the area and to put something with the owners smell in the last spot where the dog was seen and to do a 24-hour stake-out... dog will be relying on his sense of smell to get back to safety...so it is important to have something he recognizes, maybe even his toys in the area where he was lost.

Media:

- Local newspapers - keep a list of contacts so you can mobilize quickly.
- Local television and radio stations – LOCAL is everything.

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- Community television stations (Rogers in Ontario/Shaw out West/Cogeco out East)
- Many media outlets don't do "lost pet" reports – as, sadly, they occur too frequently and are not "news". Large Canadian broadcasters like CTV, Global, CBC do not do stories on lost pets unless there is a major community/story involved.
- Make the story as compelling as possible. Try to get the attention of media personalities who are known pet lovers. Ask if radio/TV stations might publicize on "quiet news days".
- Each rescue group should have a dedicated volunteer to work with newspapers/media.

Trapping:

- Please ensure you get the guidance of professionals if you need to trap.
- Get a large trap with a drop-down guillotine door and set it in a private place, hopefully somewhere that it can be easily and frequently checked. Around a backyard shed and away from activities in the neighborhood, other cars, traffic. They are usually hiding, scared stiff and very hungry.
- Now is the time for you to make this your "feeding station". Pet will start smelling good food, hot food that will send the smells around and draw them to the trap.
- Trap needs to be totally camouflaged - animals are not stupid - having the trap in a dark place, up against a wall, side against a wall, cover the top and front and lots of leaves over thin cardboard and/or towel (or both) in the bottom of the trap, so they don't feel the metal grates underfoot, but be very careful not to block or disrupt the door closing with cardboard or towel.
- Trap should be so situated and covered up that it cannot be seen, even close up and for sure totally black at the back. No light showing the metal grates.
- Set the trap on a hair trigger and test it so the door will fall all the way down and not jam halfway, before adjusting it so that as soon as she goes to the far end to get the food, it will drop down fast and the trap is big enough that animal will be too far away to make it back before the door slams down.
- Trap must be monitored at all times. Do not leave it unattended, so you can see when you trap dog or if you trap another animal you can release etc.
- Food: hot roasted chicken, turkey meat, bacon, fried liver, pouring a full pot of bubbling hot turkey gravy over all the meat at the far end. If you can smell it, the dog would smell it too. Set the trap just as night falls, as the dog would be coming out to forage for food under cover of night. ****If you have the confirmed sightings around a certain, smaller neighborhood house for example, you will be upping the chances of getting him/her and the larger trap will not trigger and trap a cat because they're not heavy enough.**
- Enlist the persons who live where the trap is set to check on it for you. Most people are more than happy to do so, especially kids. Kids are your best defense and they want the reward so much that they will be actively scouring the area for a sighting. Be sure to tell them that they must only call in a sighting as the dog is wild and you want hi/her to stay and not run.
- Once you get animal trapped, DO NOT open the trap door to take him out. Lash/tie the trap door shut in case you have to transport the cage sideways. Any cracks, the animal will find, ram and run.
- Transport the animal in a trap to a safe location - such as inside the compound of the local SPCA/animal control where an animal can bolt – a dog will bolt into the kennel set up for him.
- When you remove him/her, he/she must have a long lead attached 24 hours a day for

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maybe a whole month as he/she is still a big flight risk. And if you lose him, you will not be able to get him ever again. There is only one chance to do this.

. Leave him/her quiet for a few days in a quiet area. Re-stabilization of the animal is key.

Scent Dogs:

<http://www.waggzandwhiskerz.com/LostPetServices.html>

Animal Detectives:

Ontario Provincial Missing Animal Response Services Phone: 647-203-1279,
info@opmars.com, <http://www.opmars.org/index.html>

<http://www.citytv.com/toronto/citynews/news/local/article/11099--have-nose-will-travel-dog-detective-finds-lost-pets>

Additional resources/info:

<http://www.missingpetpartnership.org/recovery-lostdog.php>

Clean Up / Follow Up / Wrap Up

- Writing 'found' on the posters is a very nice gesture and builds goodwill.
- Go through entire checklist and advise or notify anyone who helped – keep relations good for next time – sadly, there will be one!
- Update all social networking sites so people don't continue to look for the animal.
- Do follow up stories with media.
- Celebrate your success.
- Later, be a good citizen and take down your posters. The next lost pet will need the space.

C4P ANIMAL RESCUE thanks the following for their contributions to this public service initiative:

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Dora Sesler, Project Pet Rescue, Ontario

And of course, **Chase**, the little beagle who braved the streets of Toronto for 13 days during the holiday season 2009 - out-smarting 25 search/rescuers, staying ahead of local coyotes and completely defying the odds by coming home safe ... thanks to the goodwill of regular people who did anything and everything to bring him home.