

Checklist for Lost Indoor Cat

An escaped indoor-only cat, especially one that has never been outside before or a cat with a skittish temperament, will very likely be terrified to be lost outside. Even if you have an inseparable bond with your cat, do not expect him to come out when you search and call his name. Some cats will, but far more cats are too frightened to do so. Even if you cannot find your cat with repeated searches, it is very likely that he is still in the area. Do not give up hope!

1. Physical Search

A. Search within Your Home

If no one saw your cat escape, search within your own home thoroughly. Do not expect your cat to respond to your voice if they are frightened, sick, injured or trapped.

- Search within the first 1-2 days or as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- If there is any chance your cat is trapped, repeat your search several times and at least once after 7-10 days. Some cats will respond after being trapped for this long.

B. Search Outside Your Home and the Surrounding Area (25% of cats are found this way):

Search all potential hiding spots on your own property and up to 3-5 houses (or 500 feet – ¼ mile) from your house in all directions. Make sure to get the property owners' permission before doing this.

- This is most effective if done within the first 1-2 days, but some skittish cats will remain hidden longer.
- Get permission to search in any structure that has been opened since your cat escaped, such as sheds, garages or basements. Search under porches, sheds and decks with a flashlight.
- If there was any location you could not thoroughly search, such as a full shed, repeat your search at these locations at least once after 7-10 days. Some cats will respond after being hidden for this long.
- When it is quietest (often late night or before dawn), try walking around your neighborhood with a flashlight and search under cars and in front yards for the eye-shine of any cats.

C. Simply Sitting:

- Try spending some time just sitting quietly in your yard such as reading a book. Sometimes this is more effective than actively searching and will draw your cat out of hiding. Make sure to bring some of his favorite food with you. For more information on Simply Sitting, visit Cats in the Bag www.catsinthebag.org.

D. Search Dog:

- If you are potentially interested in hiring a search dog team, then read this article so you know what to expect: lostpetresearch.com/resources/search-dogs/. **Less than 20% of lost cats are found using a search dog.**

2. Trapping & Surveillance

A. Leave a Way for your Cat to Come Home and the "House Trap" (25% of cats return home on their own)

- If possible, leave a way for your cat to return home, such as an open porch, garage or window, preferably near the point where he got out. Many indoor-only cats will attempt to return home within the first week after escaping, and they will most frequently do so in the middle of the night when no one sees them.
- To turn this into a "House Trap" you need to monitor the entrance with a video camera or motion alarm (even a baby monitor can work) and rig a way to shut the door after your cat enters.
- Place some items from home that smell like your lost cat (e.g. a blanket he slept on) near where he got out.

B. Humane Traps

- Borrow or purchase a humane trap or two. About 25% of cats are found this way! Place one trap near the point of escape and another one at the back of your property, such as near a shed or garage.

C. Surveillance

- Trapping or feeding stations (i.e. food placed out for your lost cat) are more effective if used with some form of surveillance. A trail camera is the best way to confirm who is eating the food you are leaving out. These can also be used to verify potential

3. Advertising

A. Posters:

Creating and posting effective lost pet posters is one of the most important things you can do! (*This is especially true if you have not found your cat within the first week*)

- Check for any town bylaws stating where and how signs may be legally posted.
- Start with posters in your immediate neighborhood and up to ¼ mile.
- Expand posters ½-1 mile per week if no sightings.
- Posters are easiest to read if placed where cars must slow down or stop.
- Your phone number and cat's picture must be large enough that they can be easily seen and read by someone sitting in a car or driving. Also include a very brief description of your cat (including that he is an indoor-only cat) and the date he escaped.

B. Flyers:

Flyers should be hand delivered or placed in locations where people walk. Explain that your cat is indoor-only and probably hiding in fear. Ask people to check their property for any sign of your lost cat. Flyers should not be used in place of posters where people are driving. This is the most frequent mistake that people make!

- Start by distributing flyers in your immediate neighborhood.
- Flyers may also be distributed in areas of potential sightings.
- Post flyers at any local businesses, parks, pet supply stores, and the library and post office.
- Give flyers to anyone who regularly works in your neighborhood, such as the mailman.

C. Microchip:

- If your cat is microchipped, contact the company and inform them that your cat is missing. Also make sure that your phone number and address on file are up-to-date.

D. Shelters and Rescue Groups:

Locate all local shelters and rescue groups (try www.petfinder.com/animal-shelters-and-rescues/search/).

- Visit and provide a copy of your flyer. If you cannot visit, at least submit a lost pet report.
- Ask to see all cats, including those not on the adoption floor.
- Find out how long they hold new cats before putting them up for adoption, and visit at least this often.

E. Animal Control, Vets and Department of Public Works

- Contact your local Animal Control Officer and find out if they pick up stray cats.
- Cars rather than predators are often the greatest danger to lost cats. Find out who in your town picks up deceased animals and if they check cats for microchips/ID tags. This may be the Department of Public Works.
- Contact all local vets and your closest emergency vet and give them a copy of your flyer.

F. Post Lost Pet Ads

- Post online classifieds with local newspapers.
- Post online ads on craigslist in Pets and Lost & Found, and repost weekly.
- Post your cat on www.lostmykitty.com, www.helpinglostpets.com, and www.tabbytracker.com
- Many local papers will post a small lost pet ad for free. However, a larger ad with photo is more effective.
- Post on social networking sites, such as Facebook. Also check for any "Community" pages for lost pets : **Lost and Found pets in Lincoln County NC and surrounding areas:** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/244760249025388/>)
- Check online and in newspapers for any "found" or "for sale" ads that could be your cat.

Release of Liability: HATS accepts no liability for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of information provided in this checklist. By reading and using this checklist, you are releasing HATS and the distributors of this plan from all liability and accepting full responsibility for the search for your lost pet.

This is only a very brief list of search actions. There is much more that you could be doing to find your lost dog! For professional help, contact Lost Pet Research & Recovery at (413) 539-3530 or <http://LostPetResearch.com>. Lost Pet Research & Recovery offers lost dog phone consultations. Additional information on lost dog behavior is available from Missing Pet Partnership: <http://www.missingpetpartnership.org>.