

What to do if you find a stray cat or dog



BVA client leaflet Number 8 • May 2014

Pets can become strays if they are lost or abandoned or if they have been stolen. Strays are often hungry, frightened and sometimes sick and injured. If you think that you have found a stray dog or cat, before trying to get close to them, think about their safety and about yours. If you can bring the dog or cat under control, speak calmly to reassure them and take them to safety. If the dog or cat is wearing a collar, the owner's contact details might be on it. If not, the dog or cat may have a microchip that can be scanned and the owner's details located.

Dogs and cats can be aggressive if they are frightened or injured. Always think how they might react before you approach them. If you feel that the situation is not safe or you think that a dog is dangerous, call a dog warden or the police. Make a note of where you saw the dog and a description of the dog, such as its size, colour and type (if you know what it is).

Who to contact if you find a stray dog

If you cannot find the owner's details, contact your council or PSNI and they will arrange for the dog to be collected. Council dog wardens can scan microchips and they can check the dog licence disc attached to the collar to find the owner's contact details. Most dog warden services are only available in office hours. If you find a stray dog outside office hours, your council's website should give details of where you can take it – see **More help**. There may also be an out-of-hours contact number. If you wish you may keep a stray dog temporarily in your home while trying to contact the owner or the dog warden service, which you must do.

Who to contact if you find a stray cat

If you find a stray cat the first place that you should check is the neighbourhood where you found the cat. Cats often roam around their neighbourhood and can cover a wide area so a roaming cat may not be lost or stray. You should ask around to see if anyone knows who the cat belongs to. If the cat is not tame or friendly, it might be a feral (living as wild) cat that can look after itself. If you are unable to find the stray cat's owner

you can take it to safety in your home while you make some enquiries – see the animal charities in **More help** for details.

Sick or injured strays

If you find a dog or a cat that is sick or injured and in need of emergency treatment, there are places that you can take them for first aid and pain relief. It is important that if the dog or cat has an owner they are found as soon as possible because treatment is limited where funding is unavailable. The dog or cat may have to be put down if they are too poorly to survive their injury or illness. You can call the council or the PSNI to arrange for the stray animal to be collected, or you can take a stray dog or cat to a local animal hospital or clinic. If you don't know where to go you can call a charity helpline such as the USPCA and they will give you the details of the nearest emergency service.

More help

If you find a stray cat or dog and you would like some advice, you can contact any of the organisations, animal charities and lost and found services in the list below.

Animal Search UK

This is a search service and website for missing pets using an online form.

www.animalsearchuk.co.uk

Cats Protection

There are branches and adoption centres across the UK. Call 03000 121212 or email a question to:

helpline@cats.org.uk

www.cats.org.uk

Doglost.co.uk

This is a national database of lost and found dogs.

Register on their website, call 0844 800 3220 or email:

admin@doglost.co.uk

www.doglost.co.uk

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Dogs Trust

A nationwide network of rehoming centres across the UK. Make an enquiry using their online form at:
www.dogstrust.org.uk/rehoming/searchcentres/default.aspx#UzrlWfldXjs

Dog Warden – local council

See website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/lost-and-stray-dogs
Find your local council: www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland.htm

Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)

Call the non-emergency number 101 to arrange collection of a stray dog.
www.psni.police.uk

Ulster Society Prevention Cruelty to Animals (USPCA)

Call 028 3025 1000 or regional telephone numbers on homepage.
www.uspca.co.uk

UK national missing pets register

Information, resources and help to reunite missing pets with their owners. Register online to post sightings.
www.nationalpetregister.org

About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at www.bva.co.uk/public