

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 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 found on a lost-and-found service database.

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 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

Local-authority dog wardens are responsible for stray dogs so this is the first place that you should call if you don't know who the owner is as they will be able to scan the dog's microchip if it has one. During normal office hours, you should be able to contact the local authority where you found the dog. If you find a stray dog at any other time, the local authority may provide an out-of-hours service. In some areas there will be an out-of-hours phone number or a drop-off point where you can take the dog and hand them in if the dog warden is not available. Don't forget, always contact the local authority to report that you have found a dog, if you don't you could be breaking the law.

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 a 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 not able to

find the cat's owner, you can take it into 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 needs 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 if funding is not available. The dog or cat may have to be put down if they are too poorly to survive their injury or illness. 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 RSPCA and they will give you the details of the nearest emergency service. The RSPCA may collect sick or injured animals if it is not possible or sensible for you to catch them.

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/index.aspx

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 the website:
www.cosla.gov.uk/scottish-local-government

Scottish SPCA

Call 03000 999 999 for injured, neglected and distressed animals between 7am–11pm.
www.scottishspca.org

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