



LOST DOG ACTION STEPS



We are sorry to hear that your dog is missing. The first 24-48 hours are the most critical, and the effort you put in during this critical time will dramatically increase the likelihood that you will recover your pet safely. However, searches can sometimes go on much longer. Your ongoing, sustained and proactive involvement is critical to success.

HARTT's team of lost pet consultants are all volunteers – we do our very best to contact owners of lost dogs quickly, but due to the large volume of cases we receive, it may take a number of days for us to reach out to you. Please know that we understand how much you want your dog back, therefore, here are the most important steps you can take NOW, even before your first call with your HARTT consultant. DON'T WAIT! Start implementing these steps immediately, and you can share what you've already tried with your HARTT consultant once we reach out.

Even if your pet was lost from an unfamiliar area, approximately 70% of the lost dogs we help stay within a 1 mile of where they went missing (even if this is location an area they've never been to before). Using that probability, we will concentrate on this area first. The strategy also may be a bit different if your dog is young/healthy, or old/sick/medically compromised, and if your dog is confident/social or shy/skittish.

Please read and check off each item once you've read and completed the task:

- _____ ONLY if you can do this safely and ONLY if there are no other pets, children or vulnerable adults to worry about, **prop open all yard gates, and even front doors**, so that your lost dog can choose to easily return to the yard and home if she so chooses.
- _____ **STOP doing laundry and scooping your yard**; you will want to preserve all "scent material" which may become very important in the search. This includes preserving any solid dog waste (your missing dogs', or waste from the other dogs in your home) in zip-loc bags and not laundering your dog's bedding, other pets' bedding, or even some items of your family's laundry. Scent is the most powerful sense to an animal, and these scent items can be used strategically (more about this later).
- _____ **Find a few good quality photos** of your dog right away, PREFERABLY one with your dog in a standing or walking position – this photo may be used for lost pet flyers.
- _____ **Search your home and yard** – are you sure your pet isn't just hiding? Nervous pets can hide or become trapped in (depending on size) very small areas. Check all these places:

INDOORS

- _____ Under beds
- _____ Under and behind other furniture in the home
- _____ In closets (doors may have closed behind your dog)
- _____ For small dogs, in cabinets that may have been left open and have sense been closed

OUTDOORS

- _____ Under the home (if there is a crawl space, such as under manufactured homes)
- _____ Under or in storage sheds
- _____ Under parked vehicles
- _____ Under or behind outdoor furniture
- _____ Under and behind shrubs and plants, or debris in the yard

_____ **Set up food and water** (we call this a “feeding station”) in your yard, CLOSEST TO THE DOOR WHERE YOUR PET EXITED FROM. If your dog is hiding close by, this food and water can draw him back. Even if there are other animals in the neighborhood who might be attracted by the food and you may have to replenish, we want YOUR pet to easily find food and water whenever they return. THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU CAN DO! Refresh the food at least once a day, preferably twice. Choose DESIRABLE food – wet dog food, tuna, etc. During ant season, make sure all food is ant-proof by placing a heavier food bowl inside a shallow outer pan, and fill that outer pan with water to form an “ant moat.” Also place a feeding station at the scene of ANY sighting location you receive! If you are concerned about birds eating the food, wait until dusk to set up your feeding stations, when birds are asleep.

_____ **Do you have any type of WIFI security camera?** Ring, NestCam, Arlo, etc? OR, can your family members or friends loan you such a camera? If so, relocate your camera to close to ground level and point it at your feeding station to see if your dog is coming around after bedtime or at other times of the day. If you know any hunters, they may be able to also loan you a wireless “game camera” to capture photos of animals who come to your feeding station. You can also buy game/trail cameras on Amazon for under \$75.00.

_____ **Place scent items**, such as solid waste from your yard or items of clothing from a person with whom your dog is bonded, about 5 feet from the feeding station. Also place scent items at the location of ANY sighting location you receive!

_____ **Conduct a search** on foot or by car, ideally just before sunset or right at sunrise. Package up a treat jar to shake, and any favorite toys that make noise (squeaky toys and crinkly potato chip bags are ideal). Begin walking or driving your neighborhood SLOWLY, looking closely in other yards. HARTT in general discourages rigorous ground searches with large teams because their presence may cause a frightened dog to flee the area. Get a high-powered flashlight and search bushes and shrubs from a bit of a distance after dark.

_____ **Look for neighbors with cameras.** Some will have doorbell cameras, others will have security cameras mounted outside their homes. Make a note of the addresses of each of these homes in the areas where your dog went missing. Then, armed with a flyer, visit EACH home and try to speak with a resident. Be heartfelt in your request – introduce yourself as one of their neighbors and explain where you live. Tell them you are very worried about your missing dog and ask if they would kindly look back at the footage on their camera, from the date and time your dog went missing, to see if their cameras

happened to catch a glimpse of your dog and which way s/he was headed. Ask them to call you with their findings.

Go door to door: IF your dog is frightened or injured, s/he may be hiding or may not be very mobile. Knock on the doors of as many neighbor's houses as possible, give them a flyer and ask them to keep an eye out for your dog.

Are there cat feeders in your area? Many neighborhoods that have a population of stray or feral cats have a "caregiver" somewhere in the neighborhood who feeds and looks after the cats. Look for homes with bowls of cat food and water outside – chances are, they are a cat feeder. Be sure to visit these people, as your dog may have also found this free food source and be frequenting their property! Ask them to keep a watch out for your dog.

Special needs circumstances: If there is reason to believe your dog may be sick or injured (ie, dog is geriatric, disabled, was seen hit by a car or was in an auto accident), then a careful, quiet grid search is highly advised in case your dog is not able to move.

Do NOT have a multitude of people calling out the dog's name – if 5 different people are calling "Buddy!" in 5 different areas or on 5 different streets, the dog will have no idea which direction they are supposed to go. Also, calling a dog's name, clapping or whistling can also trigger a panicked "*Oh no – they're looking for me!*" flight response in a dog and can be counterproductive. HARTT recommends that ONLY an owner with whom the dog is bonded should call the pet's name. Even then, with shy dogs, calling the dog's name can work against you. Please ask your HARTT consultant about "shy dog protocol" and how to attract a nervous pet to you. Others in the search party should merely search and, when the animal is spotted, notify the owner of the exact location.

If your dog is microchipped, **call your microchip company** and report him missing! Your veterinarian or the shelter or rescue group from whom you adopted your pet should be able to tell you the name of the microchip company they use, their phone number, and, your pet's microchip number if you can't find it. Make sure your contact information is current, in case your dog is found and scanned for a chip.

If your dog is located, the first priority is to keep the dog calm and do nothing that could drive him into a roadway or other dangerous area. The owner should proceed quickly to the scene with a favorite toy, treats, and a leash.

Once on scene, we recommend that the owner sit down, slightly angled away from the dog. The owner should begin talking softly just so the dog can hear their voice and identify them as familiar. Whenever possible, allow the dog to approach the owner. Try not to make any rapid movement or gestures. We call this behavior "shy dog protocol". It's always best if your pet approaches YOU first. If you try to pursue your dog, they could rapidly run from the area (and you can't outrun them anyway!).

We recommend calling your HARTT consultant ASAP once you have eyes on your dog. If he won't come to you, we can coach you on what to do next, or expedite getting a humane trap to the scene (more about this below).

Online and Social Media Sites

Not a big computer user? Not on social media? That's ok – recruit a family member, child, grandchild, friend or neighbor to handle this part of the work. Don't skip it! Many people communicate about lost and found pets on these sites; don't miss this opportunity to communicate about or search for your lost pet!

Nextdoor – This smart phone app is the MOST IMPORTANT social media site to use for lost dogs. It's free to use and was created as a way for neighbors in specific areas to communicate with one another. Posts on NextDoor (ND) range from crime reports, to mechanic shop recommendations, to nearby school bake sales, to lost and found pets. In general, only a resident can post on ND for their specific “neighborhood” and a small range of nearby neighborhoods. If you aren't already a member of NextDoor, it can take up to a week to be “approved”. Ask your neighbors if any of them are members of the site, and they can post for you.

Neighbors by Ring app – You don't need to own a Ring device to download this app, which also focuses on the area nearest your home. Put a virtual flyer on this app to spread the word that your pet is missing.

Maricopa County Lost and Found Pet

Map (<https://gis.maricopa.gov/ACC/Stray/index.html>) this site will show the location of lost and found pets within the past few days (older found pets will not be visible on the site). All strays who come into MCACC are posted on this site, using the location where they were found. NOTE – this location could be MILES from where your pet went missing so search all listings in a wide area as well.

Craigslist (“CL”) (<https://phoenix.craigslist.org/>) – This online ad page is free to use. Check in both the “LOST AND FOUND” and in the “PETS” section. Search for your pet AND post your pet. Beware of color – you may consider your dog to be “tan”, but someone who may have already found your dog may have listed her as “buff”, “yellow” or “gold”. Posts quickly roll to the bottom, so we recommend refreshing your post at least every 2 days.

Facebook (“FB”) – many different lost pet sites can be found on FB – here are a few for the Maricopa County, Arizona area:

- Straydar <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Straydar/>
- StraydarAZ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/798423246969450/>
- Straydar Scottsdale/PV/Arcadia <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1280153812030349/>
- Lost Dogs of Arizona <https://www.facebook.com/lostdogsaz/>
- Lost and Found Pets of Peoria, Glendale, El Mirage, Sun City & Youngtown <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1810302072550418/>

Paper Flyers - NOTHING takes the place of basic paper flyers, posted all over your neighborhood! Even if you have posted online and searched all of those posts, you are typically only reaching “pet people” who are active in the animal community. This means that all others who do not have pets and do not follow pet issues will never know you are searching for a pet! Paper flyers will reach parents out for a stroll with babies or toddlers; fitness walkers; people passing casually through a neighborhood; seniors; and kids playing in the neighborhood.

For DOG owners, **we recommend hanging at least 100 flyers in a 1-mile radius RIGHT AWAY.** It takes one person about an hour to hang 25 flyers (4 hours total for 100 flyers). Use 3M clear packing tape (NOT duct tape, NOT blue or green painter’s tape and not regular scotch tape) to adhere signs to surfaces. If you and 3 others go out to hang flyers and search (2 hours each), that will be 4 of you looking for your pet; if you put up 100 flyers and each one is seen by 30 people, that will be 3,000 people helping to look for your pet!!

Does your HOA or neighborhood have a restriction on flyers? RARELY do these organizations actually enforce the restriction or fine you for placing them. In most cases, the worst case is they will tear them down. We would prefer even a few hours of exposure from a well-placed flyer than no flyer in that location at all. Please be responsible and remove flyers timely after the conclusion of a search, to keep neighborhoods happy and to make things easier for the owners of other pets in the future. If your flyers are being taken down, consider hanging more of them on Friday late afternoon, so that they get maximum exposure over the weekend before they are potentially removed again on Monday, the next business day.

Flyers should be eye catching, simple, printed in color, contain a clear picture and minimal wording (see sample under “resources” below), and have the phone number of someone who will answer their phone 24/7 and will be extremely thorough about keeping a log of all sightings called in. Flyers can be posted on community mailboxes, bulletin boards, traffic signs, and other locations where people walk or drive by. We suggest placing them upside down in sheet protectors to protect the signs somewhat from inclement weather.

Lost pet flyer tips

Brought to you by HARTT
(azhartt.org)



Purchase multiple rolls of clear packing tape.

Hang flyers using one strip vertical strip top to bottom (extending 3-4 inches past top and bottom to get solid coverage).



Print lost pet flyers on bright cardstock (yellow or orange) paper to catch attention. Do not clutter flyer with information - keep to the key information. Of note: having ANY flyer up is better than nothing!

As time goes on, make sure to replace any tattered flyers with fresh ones. Once your pet is found, promptly remove flyers so there is a clean slate available for any future lost pets.



Hang flyers in (at least) a TWO mile radius for lost dogs. Even the smallest of dogs, who have never been lost before, can cover long distances.

Hang flyers in a HALF mile radius for lost cats. Cats tend to stay close to home and don't run like dogs do.

If you still aren't receiving sightings called in, continue to expand your flyer radius.



Hang at least 100 flyers on stop signs* (3/4 ways up) located where neighborhood roads feed into larger roads. Also hang flyers on speed signs* typically 50 feet into neighborhoods. You will get the most eyes in these locations versus light poles and mailboxes.

Be sure to not cover the reflective tape on the stop sign and do not wrap flyers around poles (leave the corners free so that it is easier to read).



When rain is in the forecast, we encourage owners to put flyers in plastic sleeves with the opening on the bottom sealed by a piece of tape. This way when it rains, the water slides right off instead of inside where the flyer is.



For rural areas, utilize old political boards or poster boards to stake into the ground.

If camping and you don't have access to poster board, use paper plates to create flyers (again - better to get something up versus nothing). Attach to trees.

* Be mindful of local ordinances regarding signage

See sample flyer attached – you can leave out details the average person won't be able to see from a distance, such as age, weight, eye color, or gender. **Please notify your HARTT consultant if you need help designing flyers – we are happy to create a design for you! We can order black and white or color flyers for you from a nearby print shop at a significant nonprofit discount – please ask your HARTT consultant how to reimburse our charity for the printing of these flyers.**

Handbills and business cards

These smaller versions of flyers are more suitable for distributing by hand. You can also save printing costs – the handbills are printed 3 or 4 per page, and the business card format, 10 per page. Hand these smaller handbills or cards out to:

- Neighbors – go door to door
- UPS, postal workers or Amazon drivers (people who drive for a living and can be your eyes)
- Trash or utility workers
- Joggers, walkers, park goers
- Veterinary offices, boarding facilities and groomers

Yard signs

HARTT has received donations of thousands of corrugated plastic political campaign flyers which you can spray paint a neon color and affix your lost pet flyer on top of the sign. These yard signs can be placed in your own yard and throughout your neighborhood at key intersections; they are very eye-catching. They are especially effective in rural, wooded and desert areas where there are no surfaces and signs for affixing flyers. Remember WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN. Be sure to promptly remove your flyers and signs after your pet is found; this will make things easier for other families to do the same in the future.

Car painting or Car Signs

Stop at your local craft store and ask for markers or paint that can be used on automotive glass. Your car is a mobile billboard! Use your car as another way of getting the word out. Or, tape your lost dog flyers on your car as you drive about your community.

Call Arizona Humane Society (www.azhumane.org) – AHS receives most sick and injured animals – please check with them, and be sure to bring a copy of your flyer with you.

Did you locate your dog, but you can't get him to come to you?

Notify us IMMEDIATELY by calling your HARTT consultant or emailing us at info@azhartt.org – HARTT can get a humane trap to the scene, which will help you to safely recover your dog! Until you receive a trap from us, do everything you can to not spook your dog from the area. This may mean you need to feed him in that spot for a few meals, so that he chooses to stay in the area. We typically set a trap once your dog is spotted in a defined area at least a few times.



“Starter” Lost Dog Flyer

Even **TEMPORARY** hand-made flyers like this one (big letters, clear description, **LIMITED** wording) are fine to start - get **SOMETHING** up **IMMEDIATELY!**

You can always replace with a more attractive flyer afterwards!

Sample, Printed Lost Dog Flyer

LOST DOG

White Retriever

50 lbs.



Scared – do not call or chase!

Call or text 24/7
602-768-5003



Flyer design tips

1. Clear, good quality photo
2. Clear, large phone numbers
3. Basic description/color
4. Large, bold font (easy to read if driving by)
5. No unnecessary wording – do NOT include:
 - Pet’s name
 - eye color
 - gender
 - weight, if obvious by species or breed (chihuahua, cat, etc.)