

## Your Cat Goes Missing

According to the most recent Synovate pet survey (Sept. 2005), conducted in nine markets across the globe, the UK and the US were shown to be the two absolute leaders in pet ownership. Specifically, three-quarters (75%) of the UK respondents were pet owners. Since cats are low maintenance, independent, and affectionate, they fit in well with urban working lifestyles and have become the favorite pet for million of pet-owners over the last 30 years. But although cat-owners are familiar with the sight of a cat wondering the city streets early in the morning and then returning to its owner's residence to rest and eat, statistics reveal that cats are lost, stolen or abandoned and need owners who are caring and also willing to devote time to monitor their "free" lifestyles.

Thus, in order to minimize the chances of you ever having to file a missing cat report and to provide to all cat-lovers out there a short list of the things one should know and do before his or her independent companion decides to migrate and explore the unknown, we have collected the following tips you should carefully read, keeping in mind that you should not get discouraged or panic if your cat actually disappears. By following our advice and keeping yourself organized and prepared at all times, the chances are that you will be reunited with your lost friend again soon.

- Keep an action checklist in a visible location, along with the current phone numbers of emergency contacts, like individuals and organizations you will need to call in case of emergency.
- Always remember to have a rubber (elastic) collar placed around your cat's neck portraying an identification tag (ID) that will display the cat's name and your current home and/or cell phone number.
- Over the years, there has been evidence that cats are stolen for laboratory use, for the fur-trade, or are killed by malicious, sick individuals. Moreover, pedigree cats may be stolen to serve an order. Thus, prior to having to deal with any unfortunate event, register your cat to the available services of your area. In most cases registration can be completed online and you will save precious time if something actually happens. Then, have the attached tag display its registration number. You can find it again sooner by using the number on the tag. It can be its ticket home.
- For real security, consider putting a microchip implant to your cat or tattooing it and register the chip's number with one of the registries in your area.
- Ensure you have recent and reliable color photos of your cat and be sure you note unique markings or characteristics, such as scars. You have to take shots of both sides of your cat's body, as well as its face (portrait).
- Write and frequently update a short, simple and clear description of your cat and have it stored in your computer's memory -along with the recently taken photographs- in order to create posters and flyers if your cat gets lost / stolen.
- Search and save the webpages of your local animal control authorities and "lost and found" online registries for immediate retrieval.
- Make sure you have the local pet authorities' phone numbers on your "emergency contact list" and check them frequently for any updates. Also, keep a copy of a recent local street map along with this emergency contact list. In case you need to coordinate a search unit this map will be the first thing you will need to distribute.
- Create a "lost kit" in case your cat should ever run away. The copies of its current photographs, some pre-made flyers, a flashlight, the phone numbers of animal control centers, the police, the vet, a couple of its favorite items in order to be placed outdoors and delicious canned food can be included in this kit. When you are on vacation and hire an animal sitter, this kit will contain everything needed if your cat is lost while in someone else's care.
- Avoid letting your cat roam free if you cannot rely on his/her recall. You have to keep in mind that cats are not eager to appear when you call their name. We recommend you to keep your cat always indoors unless it is adequately trained.
- Do not leave your cat unattended in the car/van and always transport your cat in a safe carrier suitable for cats.
- Be wary of strangers expressing an interest in your cat. Watch out for suspicious characters. Your cat is your responsibility. Remember not to leave your cat with friendly strangers.
- Have in mind that a spayed or neutered cat is less likely to wander off. Although this process may not be something you want to perform, it might be

one of the things that can keep your cat safe.

- Make sure that your companion is up to date on his/her vaccinations. Animals able to run free or staying at a shelter are at higher risks of being exposed to diseases. See your veterinarian about the recommended vaccines for your cat.

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