

Action Plan for A Dog Presumed Stolen - Urban Setting

If you believe your dog was stolen, you still need to proceed as if he were lost. Someone who steals a dog may get nervous and let him go, and then of course, he is lost. Refrain from using the word “stolen” on your fliers because this may deter someone who wants to return him but are afraid of the consequences.

Owners often assume their dog has been stolen because they do not see how he could have gotten out. It is easy to overlook how he could have escaped. Regardless of the circumstances, it is extremely important to flier heavily because it makes it hard for someone to claim a dog is theirs if there are posters up everywhere.

- **Creation of fliers** - (fliers are extremely important - people pay more attention to them than you realize).
 - Prominently display MISSING DOG across the top with a huge picture. You have little time to capture people's interests. The less words - the better.
 - Point out any definitive marks on your dog - breeds don't always mean much. Does he have a white leg? A black mark on his back? Write his most definitive mark.
 - Only include personal information that you want shared. It isn't recommended that you put the address down.
 - Create a PDF and a JPEG of your poster. The JPEG is easily shared on social networks and the PDF is a better file to email and print in a large size.
 - Check your local ordinances about where you can post your fliers. Painters tape, duct tape, and the packing tape with the strings in it are the best for poles.
 - If you enter a business and they say NO - ask them to post it in the break room or to take it personally and share with their friends.
- **Print as many fliers as you can.** Color is nice, but black and white helps too.
- **Locations to post fliers:**
 - Bus stops
 - Coffee shops
 - Bars
 - Tattoo shops (very helpful)
 - Pet stores
 - Supermarkets
 - Light poles by shopping malls
 - Your neighborhood
 - Schools *children are VERY observant*
 - In your car window
 - In front of restaurants
 - Bicycle shops

- Hand to - postmen, UPS, fedex, etc. (they can't post them but they can carry them with them personally)
- Running shops
- **A note on fliers** - think about who the people are that are out in the city every day. These are your bus drivers, landscapers, service people, contractors, postal workers, police officers, bike couriers, cab drivers... these are all people who pay a lot of attention to what happens in the city.
 - Are your neighbor's having their roof done? Go over with cookies, hand out fliers to the roofers, and ask for their help.
- **A note on police officers** - just going to a police station and handing out a flier does not mean they will give them to all of their police officers. Every time you see a police car, pull over, and give them a flier.
- **Consider high traffic areas like grocery stores** - ask the manager if you can set up a table in the parking lot and hand out fliers. Most people will agree as it is for a good cause. This is an excellent way to hit a LOT of people quickly.
- **Translate the fliers into Spanish** - google translate will do this for you for free and we also have a Create a Flyer link on our website. Pass these out in Hispanic neighborhoods.
- **Pick major prominent intersections in the city.** For these - go buy NEON pink, yellow, green HUGE poster boards. Tape your smaller poster prominently in the middle. Then write MISSING DOG on the poster. Put these in intersections and make sure they are on the poles where people will be looking when they are stopped.
- **Monitor craigslist** - all over. Not just in your local community.
- **When entering rough neighborhoods:**
 - Dress the part - don't look like you stand out. Jeans and a black tank top will suffice.
 - No (or little) jewelry.
 - Do not wear a purse or if you do, wear one that slings around - crossbody.
 - Walk confidently. Remember - you have a purity of purpose for being there. You aren't messing with people's business. For the most part - when people realize what your flier says, they'll leave you alone.
 - Carry your tape and fliers in your hand. Easy in and out works.

- If you have a friend with - have them drive so you can jump out quickly to post a flier. Tape in the car, jump out, post, keep moving.
 - If you have a street team of people - park in a busy area. Take dogs with you - walk the streets and hand out fliers, post them up. Cover the busy, high-traffic sections.
- **Beginning a social media campaign:**
 - Use Facebook, Twitter and email.
 - Create a public Facebook page
 - Name it something that evokes emotion – MISSING DOG - FIDO NEEDS HELP -something to that effect.
 - Share where you have been fliering
 - Encourage people to share the JPEG of your poster. These are easily shared and tweeted and can be sent through hundreds of people very quickly.
 - Don't just do this once. Do it every day. Ask for help - over and over.
 - Share your emotions. Do not get angry. Simply talk about how upset, scared, tired, etc. that you are. This gets people involved in your STORY.
 - Finding a dog is about creating a movement. To do so - you need to put yourself out there. That means you include people in your pain, your trials, and how hard you are working. This is hard to do but Facebook makes it so much easier. People will follow you but you have to be consistent with your posts and make it emotional.
 - THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT: When a business or a high profile page shares your picture or status - go back on your page and thank them publicly. Example: And a HUGE thanks to Hal's Harley Davidson for sharing our dog in their newsletter!! Why do you do this? Because it makes other people want to get on board. If they see restaurants and other people sharing it - they will want to be a part of it. Everyone wants to be a part of helping - especially when they see others doing it.
 - Post pictures of your dog
 - Do not post pictures that show how many nice things you have in your house - your pup sitting under a 52" Flat Screen TV is just asking for people to break into your house.
 - Don't post pictures of you.
 - Post easily identifiable pictures of the dog - especially ones that make people go "awwwww."
 - Tell stories with the pictures.
 - Ask for help.

Contacting Vets and pet stores:

- Call your area animal control or stray holding facility) every day. Not just once. Every day. Why? They get hundreds upon thousands of dogs. They do not always categorize the dogs properly. They may call a lab a pitbull if it looks like one. Even better? Go there, introduce yourself, and hand them a flier.
- Shelters will scan the dog for microchips. If your dog is not microchipped, you need to call shelters and offer to email them the flier.
- There are lists of vets. Sit down and call each one and offer to email or fax a flier.
- Touch base with your list weekly. Ask friends to help.
- Some vets do not have fax/email - so MAIL them a flier. This is key. In a bi-lingual neighborhood? Mail them in Spanish and English.

Call Local Media:

- Be professional in your approach.
- List the facts as you know them.
- Explain why this is a story that is newsworthy.
- All radio stations and news channels do have contact numbers on their websites.
- Radio is good - there are many stations that have options such as "daily dog, etc." where listeners can send their animals in.
- **There is no guarantee that they will pick up the story - but you don't know if you don't try.**

Notes on not giving up:

- Consider this a job. You have now launched a campaign. This is a media campaign as well as a cause.
- If you stop - other people will too.
- Repetition is key. You must touch people OVER AND OVER before they do anything. People need to see the fliers, see it on social media, have friends talk about it before they choose to get involved.
- This is a lot of work - do not be discouraged. Persistence will pay off.
- It can be completely exhausting and emotionally draining to do this on your own. But do not give up. Recruit help.
- If your friends and family won't help - then find other help. Some of your biggest advocates may be people you have never met before. Contact local rescues and ask for help.
- Ask for help OVER AND OVER.
- Have patience.