



Search Checklist for Lost Indoor-Only Cats

Most escaped indoor-only cats, especially those with limited or no outdoor experience, will be very frightened when lost outside. Even if you have an inseparable bond with your cat, do not expect them to come out when you search and call their name. Some cats will, but most cats are too frightened to do so. Even if you cannot find your cat with repeated searches, it is very likely that they are still nearby. Many indoor-only cats have survived days, weeks or even months lost outdoors. Do not give up hope!

1. How to Conduct a Thorough Physical Search

A. Search Within Your Home (15% of cats are found still inside)

If no one saw your cat escape, search within your own home thoroughly. Do not expect your cat to respond to your voice if they are frightened, sick, injured or trapped.

- Search within the first 1-2 days or as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- If there is any chance your cat is inside, repeat your search several times and at least once after 7-10 days. Some cats will respond to your voice after being trapped or hiding for this long.

B. Search Outside Your Home and the Surrounding Area (30% of cats are found by searching)

Search all potential hiding spots on your property and up to 3-5 houses (or 500 feet to ¼ mile) from your house in all directions. Make sure to get the property owners' permission before doing this.

- Search under porches, sheds and decks with a flashlight. Search inside any sheds, garages or basements that have been open since your cat escaped. Avoid searching in dense brush or woods as you may scare your cat.
- Repeat searches of closest hiding places daily for first week and at least once after 7-10 days. Some cats will return close to home and hide. Others may respond after being hidden for this long.
- When it is quietest (often late night or before dawn), try walking around your neighborhood with a flashlight and search under cars, in front yards and up in trees for the eye-shine of any cats.

C. Try "Simply Sitting"

- Try spending some time just sitting in your yard such as reading a book or talking on the phone. Sometimes this is more effective than actively searching and will draw your cat out of hiding.

D. Hire a Search Dog

- If you are potentially interested in hiring a search dog team, then read this article so you know what to expect: lostpetresearch.com/resources/search-dogs. Only a small percentage of cats are found using a search dog.

2. How to Locate and Catch Your Cat Using Trapping & Surveillance Techniques

A. Leave a Way for Your Cat to Come Home and Try the "House Trap" (35% of cats are found returning home)

- If possible, leave a way for your cat to return home, such as an open porch, garage or window, preferably near the point where they got out. Many indoor-only cats will attempt to return home within the first week after escaping, and they will most frequently do so in the middle of the night when no one sees them.
- To turn this into a "House Trap" you need to monitor the entrance with a video camera or motion alarm (even a baby monitor can work) and devise a way to shut the door after your cat enters.
- Turn off all outside lights including motion detection lights around your home. These may scare your cat.
- Place some items from home that smell like your lost cat near where they got out. Do not place litter outside.

B. Set Humane Traps (see: lostpetresearch.com/lost-pet-resources/trapping)

- Borrow or purchase a humane trap or two. **(30% of cats are found using trapping)**. Place one trap near the point of escape and another one at the back of your property, such as near a shed or garage.

C. Use Surveillance Equipment (see: lostpetresearch.com/lost-pet-resources/surveillance)

- Trapping or feeding stations (i.e. food placed out for your lost cat) are most effective if used with some form of surveillance such as wildlife cameras, motion alarms, baby monitors or security cameras.

3. How to Conduct EFFECTIVE Advertising

A. Create and Post Well-Designed Posters

This is one of the most important things you can do, especially if you have not found your cat within the first week. **(40% of cats are found with advertising)**

- Check for any town bylaws stating where and how signs may be legally posted.
- Start with posters in your immediate neighborhood and up to ¼ mile.
- Expand posters from ½ mile to 1 mile if no sightings. Then up to 2 miles.
- Posters are easiest to read if placed where cars must slow down or stop.
- Your phone number and cat's picture must be large enough that they can be easily seen and read by someone sitting in a car or driving. Also add a very brief description of your cat (include Indoor-Only) and the date they escaped.

\$250 REWARD

Indoor-Only Cat LOST July 4



Orange Tabby
413-367-7171

B. Distribute Flyers

Flyers should be hand delivered or placed in locations where people walk. Explain that your cat is indoor-only and probably hiding in fear. Ask people to check their property for any sign of your lost cat. **Flyers should not be used in place of posters where people are driving. This is the most frequent mistake that people make!**

- Start by distributing flyers in your immediate neighborhood and up to ¼ mile.
- Flyers may also be distributed in areas of potential sightings.
- Post flyers at any local businesses, parks, pet supply stores, and the library and post office.
- Give flyers to anyone who regularly works in your neighborhood, such as the mailman and newspaper delivery.

C. Is Your Cat's Microchip Up-to-Date?

- If your cat is microchipped, make sure that the microchip is registered, and your contact information is up-to-date. Contact the microchip company and see if they provide additional lost pet support.

D. Contact and Visit Shelters and Rescue Groups

- Find a list of all the shelters and rescue groups in the area: lostpetresearch.com/resources/shelters_rescue_groups.
- Visit and provide a copy of your flyer. Ask to see all cats and not just those on the adoption floor. If you cannot visit, at least submit a lost pet report. Don't skip this step even if your cat is microchipped.
- Find out how long they hold new cats before putting them up for adoption.

E. Contact Animal Control, Vets and Department of Public Works

- Contact your local Animal Control Officer and find out if they pick up stray cats. Submit a lost pet report.
- Contact all local vets and your closest emergency vets and give them a copy of your flyer.
- Indoor-only cats are not often hit by cars, but you may want to find out who in your town picks up deceased animals and if they check cats for microchips/ID tags. This may be the Department of Public Works.

F. Post Lost Pet Ads

Only a small percentage of lost indoor-cats are found through online posting, but it is still an important step.

- Post online ads on local sites such as craigslist, NextDoor.com and any local newspapers.
- Post your cat to online databases. For a list of recommended sites see: lostpetresearch.com/online-posting.
- Post on your Facebook page and share with any local nonprofit and "Community" pages for lost or stray pets.
- Check online (petfinder.com) and in newspapers for any found, adoptable or for sale cats that might be yours.

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