

Search Action Plan for Lost Outdoor-access Cats

There are many reasons why an outdoor-access cat may go missing from his home. The three most common causes are 1) your cat is trapped somewhere in his home range, 2) your cat has been chased out of his home range and is now lost or afraid to come home, or 3) he is injured and hiding or deceased. When a cat is scared, their natural instinct is to hide and remain silent. Even if you have an inseparable bond with your cat, do not expect him to come out or meow when you search and call his name. Some cats will but far more 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 out there somewhere. Do not give up hope!*

I. Probable Causes of Disappearance <i>This information will help you determine which search actions are most important based on your situation.</i>	Suggested Search Actions <i>See Search Action list on pages 5 to 11 for detailed instructions on each search action.</i>
<p>1. Trapped</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is one of the more common reasons that a cat goes missing. • Cats are most frequently trapped within their home range* when they enter an open garage, shed, basement or crawl space. • Being trapped is more likely if your cat has previously been trapped anywhere, either within your home or on a neighbor’s property. • If your cat has ever come home particularly dirty, greasy or excessively thirsty before, then he may be cat that likes to hide/explore small spaces. • Cats have been known to get trapped in some unusual places such as on roofs, up in trees or on telephone poles, and down in storm drains. <p>*A cat’s home range is anywhere that he travels on a regular basis, and it is not necessarily defended from other cats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you’re not sure that your cat is outside, search your own home thoroughly. Cats can get trapped in closets, attics, dressers, basements, walls, and floors. This is more common if your cat is newly adopted and skittish, but can happen to any curious cat. • Talk to your neighbors within 3-5 houses and find out if anyone had any garages, sheds or basements open during the time your cat went missing. Ask to conduct a thorough search of these areas. • Also find out if anyone has recently done any construction during the time your cat went missing. Cats have been known to get trapped in crawl spaces or walls during construction. • Find out if any neighbors recently went on vacation or moved. Your cat could be trapped on their property.
<p>2. Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is anytime that your cat is truly lost. It can occur if your cat is new to the area and wandered too far or if she was chased off by another cat or predator such as a loose dog or coyote. • In this case your cat may be unsure how to come home or may be afraid to come home due to a traumatic experience. • This is more likely if your cat is newly adopted or recently moved to a new home. • Some cats will temporarily or permanently choose to leave their home if there is a big change such as a new baby, cat or dog. Other cats might even leave if you change the furniture or brand of cat food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising is very important, especially posters, because your cat is likely roaming within 1 mile of your home. • Find out if anyone in your neighborhood has a new cat or dog that runs loose. • Ask neighbors if they heard any cat fights at the time your cat went missing. • If your cat ends up in an unfamiliar place, then he is likely to be very frightened and will probably not respond to you if you search the area and call for him. • If you get potential sightings of your cat, you may want to try feeding

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	stations and surveillance cameras to confirm that it is your cat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may need to resort to a humane trap or drop trap if you locate your cat and he is too frightened to approach you.
3. Injury, Illness or Death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If cats are injured or ill, they may hide within their home range (even within their own home) and not respond when you look for them. A male cat with recent litter box problems (i.e. not using the box, straining, frequent urination or blood in urine) may indicate a urinary obstruction, which can quickly become fatal if not treated. Getting hit by a car is a far greater danger to most cats than predators. If your cat is a male between 7 months to 2 years, he is at the greatest risk of being hit by a car. Females and cats over 6 years are significantly less likely to be hit by a car. Cats may also become ill if they eat or drink something toxic. See also “Predators.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your cat was potentially ill, injured, or elderly, you should conduct a thorough search within your home and yard. Only around 25% of cats hit by a car are killed, so it is very important to search all possible hiding places for a potentially injured cat. Pay particular attention to under decks and porches of all homes within 500 ft from your home. Find out who handles deceased animal pick up in your town. This may be Animal Control or the Department of Public Works. If someone saw your cat get killed or found him deceased, they may not want to tell you because they don’t want to upset you. Therefore, it is really important to speak with your neighbors and put up posters since this will encourage them to tell you.
4. Predators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In most areas, this is less common than people tend to assume. Coyote are most likely to attack cats between May-August when they are raising their pups. Coyotes more frequently attack cats in the evening, night or dawn in urban/suburban areas. You may live in a higher risk area if coyotes are frequently seen during the day. Southern California and Arizona are high risk areas for coyote attacks. For more information on coyotes, check out this article: lostpetresearch.com/2011/08/coyote-behavior-assessing-risk-cats/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your Animal Control Officer and local shelters if an unusual number of cats have recently been reported missing. This may indicate a cat-killing predator in your town. When searching for your cat, keep an eye out for fur or remains of any cats. You may want to consider a thorough search within 500 ft to 1,000 ft of your home. Sadly, in many cases there are very little remains when a large predator kills a cat. You may need to consider forensic investigations of any remains you do find (see lostpetresearch.com/resources/forensic-investigations/)

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5. Unintentional Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This occurs when your cat climbs on or into something and is accidentally transported out of the area. • This is most likely if your cat has a history of climbing into vehicles and it was either warm on the day your cat went missing (i.e. windows were down) or someone had an open service vehicle in their driveway. • Skittish cats can also be accidentally transported out of your home if you had any furniture removed that they could have crawled into. • In really cold weather, cats have been known to climb up into car engines to stay warm. • Cats have also been known to get transported to the dump if they go missing on trash pick-up day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is really important to speak with your neighbors in this situation. Find out if anyone saw your cat or if it was warm out, did anyone have visitors who might have left their car windows down. • Also find out if there were any moving vans, construction vehicles or service vehicles parked in the area. • If you had anyone working at/in your home it is important to contact them even if your cat does not have a history of climbing into vehicles. • You will want to advertise, especially posters, over a much larger area to start if you suspect your cat was transported. Perhaps 5 miles to start. • Also contact shelters, rescue groups and vets over at least 25 miles.
6. Theft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is less common than people tend to assume. • It is more likely to happen with a recognized purebred, rare or exotic breed that is also outgoing and friendly. • Having a cat stolen and sold for research is not very common. For more information see “Safeguarding Pets” at awic.nal.usda.gov/companion-animals/pet-species • See also “Rescue” and “Intentional Disposal.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if you suspect theft, you should still follow the suggested search actions on this plan. • It is better not to write “stolen” on posters, flyers or ads because people will be less likely to want to become involved. • If you have evidence or a strong suspicion of theft, then you should contact your local police department and file a report (cats are considered property under the law). • You might also consider hiring a licensed private investigator.
7. Rescue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This occurs when someone finds and keeps your cat without knowing he already has a home. • Between 20%-40% of cat owners adopted at least one of their cats as a stray right off the street, so this is a potentially common scenario. • This is most likely to occur with outgoing friendly cats who do not have a collar or ID tags. • However, it can still occur with less friendly cats if they are found trapped or injured or have been lost for several weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising, especially posters, is very important in this situation because someone has your cat. • Also post ads to any local newspapers or online such as craigslist. • Offering a reward is advisable if you suspect someone may have your cat. • Also important to check with all local shelters and rescue groups because the rescuer may turn in your cat or submit a “found report.” • Find out if there are any feral cat colonies and/or trap-neuter-return

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also more likely to occur if you live somewhere with lots of foot traffic. • Cats that are initially lost may eventually be rescued. This may be more common in the fall/winter when lost cats are more likely to seek out humans for food and shelter. • Some cats will actually have a second home that they frequently visit, and they can become “lost” if this family locks them in or moves. 	<p>programs in your neighborhood. They may accidentally trap your cat and put him up for adoption if he is friendly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you hear on the news of an animal hoarding case in any town within 25 miles of yours, it is advisable to find out where the cats were brought and ask to see them.
8. Intentional Disposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This occurs when someone intentionally takes your cat to get rid of it. • This would most likely be someone that you know with a personal grudge or a neighbor who really doesn’t like cats. • Cats are usually “disposed of” by being driven somewhere and dumped, dropped at an animal shelter, or given to someone else. • If several cats have recently gone missing in your neighborhood, this could definitely suggest that someone local is removing the cats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you suspect someone took your cat, it is important to advertise over a larger area. – 5 miles is a good start. • You also want to check shelters over a larger area, perhaps 25 miles. • Talk with your neighbors to find out if anyone is a known cat hater. Some people get really upset if your cat is using their yard (sandbox, crawl space, garden, etc) as a litter box. • Also find out if anyone has recently been in possession of an animal trap or had pest control services at their home (not for insects). • See also search actions under “Theft.”

II. Search Action	Important Information	When and Where
<p>1. Physical Search</p> <p>A. If you are not sure your cat is outside, then search within your home thoroughly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not expect your cat to respond to your voice. • Search every small space with a flashlight. A cat can fit into any space that its head will fit into, so don't overlook small hiding spots. • The act of searching for your cat can be frightening to many cats. Sit down for at least 15 minutes in each room. Bring a can of smelly food and talk as if you were talking with your lost cat to try and draw them out of hiding. Better yet, sit and read for an hour. Stop every 15 minutes to talk to your cat and perhaps play with their favorite interactive toy. • In any room not normally used (e.g. garage, attic, basement) you might consider putting out some cat food and sprinkling some corn starch on the floor. If a cat comes out of hiding to eat the food, he will leave footprints in the corn starch. • Is there is any possible place that your cat could have gotten into and become trapped? Lost cats have been found in walls, floors, and couches to name a few places. • If you suspect your cat may be in a wall or floor, check with your fire department about using a thermal imaging camera or consider renting one. 	<p>This step is important if your cat just vanished and you do not know what happened.</p> <p>This step especially important, if your cat is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly • A kitten • Sick or injured • Newly adopted or in a new home • Very skittish • Has become trapped or hidden before 	<p>Do one very thorough search as soon as possible. Sick or injured cats may hide if they do not feel well.</p> <p>Repeat your search, at least sitting in rooms, every few days because some trapped cats will not make a sound until a few days to a week or more after they become trapped.</p> <p>Some cats can be trapped for up to several weeks and still survive if you find them and get them veterinary treatment.</p>
<p>B. Search outside your home and in your yard, and search your neighbor's yards within 3-5 houses in all directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternately, search a 500 ft radius in suburban areas or a 1,000 ft radius in rural areas. For information on using online maps to enhance your search, check this article: lostpetresearch.com/resources/online-maps/ • Do not expect your cat to respond to your voice. Rather than calling your cat's name, speak in a normal voice and talk to her the way you would within your own home. If you have any pet names or baby talk, don't be embarrassed to use these. • Bring a pillowcase or towel to hold your cat in case you find him and he is injured and panics when you pick him up. Also bring a can of cat food to lure him out. 	<p>Sick or injured cats are likely to hide within their home range. It is their instinct to hide in silence so they are not likely to respond to your calls.</p> <p>A cat hit by a car is likely to hide under a porch or deck or in the bushes around someone's home.</p> <p>Focus most of your search effort</p>	<p>Search immediately in case your cat is sick or injured.</p> <p>Repeat search once or twice a week for the first two weeks missing. Some cats will remain in silent for up to 7-10 days before meowing or coming out of hiding.</p> <p>Balance the need to search repeatedly, but not alienate your neighbors. You may need their</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your neighbors and get permission to search their yards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is very important that you search as they are unlikely to do a thorough job. ○ Explain that your cat may be injured or trapped and hiding in fear and won't come out. ○ Get permission to search in any structure that has been opened since your cat escaped such as sheds, garages or basements. ○ Give them a flyer or business card with your name and number. • See also "Important Questions to Ask Neighbors" on page 12. • Search under porches, sheds, tarps, bushes, etc with a flashlight. • Check up in trees and on roofs as well as in storm drains. • When it is quietest (often late night or before dawn), try walking around your neighborhood with a flashlight and search under cars and in front yards for the eye-shine of any cats. • <i>It is generally not advisable to walk through the woods calling your cat's name. You will likely not see him and will probably scare him farther away.</i> 	<p>around and inside buildings. When searching the woods, you are more likely to scare your cat away then find him hiding.</p>	<p>support later. At a minimum, try to search each yard twice in two weeks.</p> <p>In hot weather, recheck any closed buildings more frequently since dehydration is a much greater threat.</p>
<p>C. Search Dog</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search dogs are only likely to actually find your cat in maybe 5%-15% of cases. • In the majority of cases, a search dog can provide you with information on where to focus your search such as where to put up posters, distribute flyers, and perhaps put out a humane trap and surveillance camera. • To use a trailing dog, you need a scent article that smells only like your missing cat. This is most important if any of your other cats or dogs have been outside in the search area. Place this in a Ziploc bag to prevent further scent contamination. • Expect a search to cost somewhere between \$400-\$2,000 or more. • <i>Do not spread your cat's litter around the yard if there is any chance that you will be hiring a search dog team (a.k.a. tracking dog).</i> • For more detailed information on search dogs, visit Lost Pet Research & Recovery (lostpetresearch.com/resources/search-dogs/). 	<p>Search dogs are most important to use if your cat is elderly, sick or injured and finding them quickly is a priority.</p> <p>Search dogs can also be helpful with extremely skittish cats that are less likely to be seen. In this case they will not actually locate your cat but provide an area for you to focus your search.</p>	<p>Start trying to locate a search dog team ASAP. They are few and far between and they may not be immediately available.</p> <p>Search dogs are most useful when used in the first week, but some search dogs are capable of following a scent trail several weeks after it was made.</p> <p>Search dogs can also be used to check potential sightings.</p>
<p>2. Advertising</p> <p>A. Posters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several pet detectives with search dogs found that 80%-90% of their cases where ultimately solved with posters and not the search dog. So far I have 	<p>Rewards are recommended for lost cats. Provide a specific amount (anywhere from \$100-</p>	<p>As a general rule, you should expand your posters at least every week if you aren't getting any</p>

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<p>found that 40% of my lost cat cases were found with posters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as few words as possible! Most people put far too much information on posters. Most important are “Lost Cat,” a clear full-body photo, your phone number, and perhaps a one or two word description or additional info such as “Shy – Do Not Chase!” • The picture and phone number must be large enough so that they can be seen and read from inside a car. Try 110pt (or larger) Arial Narrow Font Bold. • Small posters can be effective, but 11”x17” or larger are best. • Posters are easiest to read when placed at intersections where cars have to stop or slow down. Face posters toward oncoming traffic. • Either laminate or place in page protectors to keep them from getting wet. • Posters that are attached to florescent poster board are much more likely to be noticed. • See Example Poster at end of Search Plan 	<p>\$500 seems to work well) and include the wording “Reward for Information Leading to Return.”</p> <p>You may want to check the local by-laws for your town/city. In some places, posting on public property is illegal or restricted.</p> <p>If your cat is lost from a new or unknown location, he may attempt to travel back to his home or a previous home. Make sure to put posters up along this potential route.</p>	<p>sightings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with the immediate neighborhood up to 1 mi • Expand from 1 mi to 2 mi • Expand from 2 mi to 3 mi <p>Replace posters that come down. After 2 weeks, consider changing your posters somewhat so people still notice them. Change the poster board color or change text to “Still Missing” or add dates of sightings.</p>
<p>B. Flyers, Postcards, or Phone Calls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyers can be 8 ½”x11” but they are better (and cheaper) if you fit anywhere from 2-8 on a page and then cut them out. Business card size is also a great option because people are more likely to hang onto these. • Important information to include: date lost, brief description, one or more phone numbers. Consider: “Call Anytime” or “Shy – Please Do Not Chase!” • If offering a reward, you should write “Reward for Information Leading to Return.” Hopefully this will encourage people to call you rather than catch your cat themselves. • Explain that your cat could possibly be hiding or trapped, and ask them to check their sheds, garages or basements. • It is most effective (but also very time consuming) to hand deliver flyers and speak with your neighbors. Some people who won’t make the effort to call you will give you more information in person. • If time rather than money is a bigger concern, you can use a service that will mail lost cat postcards or call your neighbors with a brief message. See “Amber Alerts” on lostpetresearch.com/lost-pet-resources/amber-alerts/. • Also distribute flyers to anyone that regularly works in your neighborhood such as your mailman and newspaper delivery person. 	<p>Please be aware that placing flyers in mail boxes without postage is against federal law.</p> <p>Flyers are meant to be handed out to people or posted in locations where people are walking. They should not be used in place of posters where people are driving.</p> <p>As a safety precaution, do not include your address. Instead use just a street name or intersection.</p>	<p>Start by distributing flyers in your immediate neighborhood up to a ¼ mile radius from home.</p> <p>In areas of potential sightings, distribute flyers and also find out if someone else in the area has a cat that looks like yours.</p>

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<p>C. Microchips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your cat is microchipped, contact the company and let them know that your cat is missing. Some companies offer assistance or services. • Make sure that your cat's microchip is registered, and your phone number and address are up to date. • Check with any shelters or rescue groups to find out if they routinely check cats for microchips. 	<p>In order for a cat to be found by his microchip, he must be brought into a vet or shelter and scanned with a special wand. Many people who find a cat do not think to have it scanned.</p>	<p>Contact them ASAP.</p> <p>If you are unsure if your cat's microchip is registered, do a reverse look-up using this site: www.petmicrochiplookup.org</p>
<p>D. Contact Shelters & Rescue Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lost outdoor-access cat is more likely to end up at a shelter or rescue group after he has been missing for a week or more. However, very friendly/bold cats may be picked up sooner. • Use www.petfinder.com/animal-shelters-and-rescues/search/ and www.animalshelter.org/ to search for a list of shelters and rescue groups in your area. I would suggest checking both so you don't miss any. • If possible, visit all shelters and rescue groups and give them a copy of your flyer. Find out how often they keep flyers (or lost pet reports) up. • Ask to see cats that are not yet on the adoption floor. • Find out how long they hold new cats before putting them up for adoption. • If you have a local shelter, find out if they also provide animal control services for the city/town and pick up stray cats. 	<p>Don't assume that you don't have to check these groups just because your cat is microchipped, had a collar with ID tags or you did a Pet Amber Alert.</p> <p>Don't assume that all cats are listed online. Many shelters and rescue groups are under-staffed and some cats may be adopted before ever being posted.</p>	<p>Visit the closest groups early on to give them a copy of your flyer. If you can't visit, then call and leave a lost pet report.</p> <p>Within a week, try to visit all groups within 25 miles.</p> <p>Routinely check your closest shelter, especially if they pick up stray cats.</p>
<p>E. Contact Animal Control, Vets and Department of Public Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if your town/city has an animal control officer (ACO) and if they handle cats. Many small towns only handle dogs, but they may still take a lost pet report in case someone calls in about a cat. • Cars rather than predators are often the greatest danger to an outdoor-access cat. Find out who in your town picks up deceased animals and if they check cats for microchips/collars. This is often the Dept of Public Works (DPW). • Contact all local vets and give them a copy of your flyer. See if they will allow you to post it in their office or will at least post it behind the desk for all staff to see. • Contact the 2-3 closest emergency vets as well. • If you are concerned about predators, you could ask animal control, shelters or vets if a large number of cats have recently been reported missing. This could indicate a cat-killing predator in the area. 	<p>Contact the closest emergency vets even if they are far away.</p> <p>If you are concerned about predators, visit the Lost Pet Research & Recovery blog: (LostPetResearch.com/blog)</p>	<p>Call your ACO early on in your search. Also contact vets right away in case your cat is found injured.</p> <p>If you haven't found your cat within 1 week, then find out who handles deceased cats in your town. Do not wait too long because some towns do not keep good records.</p>

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<p>F. Post Lost Pet Ads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post online ads on local sites such as craigslist, NextDoor.com and any local newspapers. • On craigslist, post in the Lost & Found and the Pets sections. Don't include your address for safety reasons. • Post on your Facebook page and share with any local nonprofit and "Community" pages for lost or stray pets. • Post your cat to online databases. Some sites will email/fax your listing to local vets and shelters and/or post to Facebook groups. For a list of recommended sites see: lostpetresearch.com/lost-pet-resources/online-posting • Check online (petfinder.com) and in newspapers for any found, adoptable or for sale cats that might be yours. • Also check all these locations at least weekly in case someone posts a found ad for your cat. 	<p>In general these are less important steps unless your cat is very friendly/bold, a kitten, or an old or sick cat.</p> <p>If you use craigslist expect to get some spam and potential scams. You might choose to just use an anonymous email address and not list your phone number.</p>	<p>Post on local sites as soon as you have the chance. Keep reposting weekly until you find your cat.</p> <p>Check with your local paper early on since it may take a week before the next edition comes out.</p>
<p>3. Trapping & Surveillance</p> <p><i>These methods would mainly be used if your cat has become displaced outside his home range or is lost from a new home or while traveling. See "Checking Sightings" for information on when to try them.</i></p> <p>A. Humane Trapping</p> <p>If possible, acquire a humane cage trap or two to have on hand when you need them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be able to borrow one from Animal Control or a rescue group. Otherwise, you can purchase one at a garden or hardware store. • Line the floor of the trap with cardboard, newspaper or a towel. • Cover the trap in a towel or blanket, preferably a dirty one that smells like home. Only cover the top and sides so it looks like a tunnel. • If you see your cat or have a likely sighting, then place near some cover such as alongside a building or under some bushes. • Place some smelly food that your cat likes in the back of the trap and dribble a few pieces leading into the trap. • Check the trap at least every 4 hours in good weather. • If possible, "alarm" the trap with a baby monitor or driveway alarm so that you know when an animal enters. • For more detailed instructions on trapping, visit Lost Pet Research & Recovery (lostpetresearch.com/instructions/trapping/). 	<p>If your cat is skittish, this may be the easiest method to catch him.</p> <p>If your cat has had a previous bad experience with a trap, then you may need to use a drop trap (see "Surveillance Cameras").</p>	<p>These should only be placed out after you have verified a sighting of your cat in an area and/or in the area where your cat went missing.</p> <p>If you're not sure that your cat would enter a trap, then start by locking or tying the trap open and placing food at the entrance of the trap. Each night the food is eaten, slowly move it farther into the trap. Once the food is in the back of the trap, only then do you set the trap. This method is most effective when used with surveillance cameras to confirm that it is your cat eating the food.</p>

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<p>B. Surveillance Cameras</p> <p>If you can afford them, surveillance cameras are an invaluable resource for locating a displaced outdoor-access cat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also called wildlife, trail, or game cameras, these are available at most sporting goods stores in the hunting section. The cheaper ones are \$60-\$100. • The cameras are motion sensitive and will take a picture of anything that walks in front of them. • The images are generally stored on an SD card, which must be retrieved to view them on a digital camera or computer. However, some more expensive cameras have wireless capabilities. • The camera may be aimed at a trap or feeding station for best results. • For best results place the camera 4-8 inches off the ground in a relatively flat area, and place the food or trap 5-15 feet from the camera. 	<p>Unless you have a good reason to move them, keep the cameras in each location at least 7-10 days. The biggest mistake people make with cameras is moving them too frequently.</p> <p>Most cameras are infrared, so the flash should not scare your cat. However, some cats seem to be able to detect the sound of the camera taking a picture.</p>	<p>At a potential sighting, you might choose to start with a feeding station and surveillance camera. Then set a trap once you confirm that your cat is present.</p>
<p>C. Feeding Stations</p> <p>Basically this is any location where you put out food for your lost cat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to combine a feeding station with some sort of surveillance. High-tech options include cameras, baby monitors or driveway alarms. • If there aren't lots of other cats around, you could place baking flour or sand around the food to capture cat footprints. • Double-sided tape, ConTact paper or lint roller sheets can be attached near the feeding station to collect fur from visiting animals. • Use some food or treats that your cat really enjoys. You can also add some dry food and some smelly food such as wet, fishy cat food. • Make sure that you put out enough food that it lasts all night (at least enough dry food). You want to make sure that there is still food available even if your cat doesn't show up until 3am. • Alternately, you may place food out first thing in the morning and not leave any food out at night if you want to avoid attracting wildlife. However, if very frightened, your cat may not come out during the day. 	<p>Anytime that you use a feeding station, you may attract other cats or wild animals. Other cats may scare your cat away. Small wildlife such raccoons, skunks and opossums can be a nuisance, but aren't dangerous. If you attract larger predators, you should either remove your feeding station or place the food in a trap.</p>	<p>Feeding stations are generally used along with surveillance cameras to help verify a potential sighting of your cat.</p>

II. Search Action	Important Information	When and Where
<p>D. Leave a way for your cat to return home If possible, leave a way for your cat to get back into the house, onto a porch or into the garage or basement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place his litter box here or some litter in a Tupperware container. If you put out the litter box, save some used litter for later use. • Place out something that smells like your lost cat (e.g. something that he has recently slept on). Alternately, or in addition, place out something that smells like someone (human or animal) that the cat is especially bonded with. • You might consider putting some food out, but discontinue doing this if you are attracting other cats or wildlife. A regular source of food may cause another cat to move into your cat's home range and defend the food source. • If possible, "alarm" the entrance with a baby monitor or driveway alarm so that you know when an animal enters. If dry food is placed near a baby monitor, you should hear when a cat is eating. 	<p>Different studies indicate that between 30-60% of lost outdoor-access cats will eventually return home on their own.</p> <p>Cats are more likely to attempt to return home when it is dark and quiet outside.</p> <p>Some cats will also return to their point of escape if away from home such as a vet's office or while camping.</p>	<p>Returning home is fairly common within the first week that a cat goes missing.</p> <p>However, some cats will return several weeks to months after they went missing.</p> <p>I recommend leaving a way for their return for at least six weeks.</p>

III. Important Questions to Ask Your Neighbors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many lost cats are actually located somewhere within their home territory and are either trapped, injured and hiding or deceased. • The average territory of an outdoor-access house cat is up to 500-1,000 feet from your home. In a suburban area this generally encompasses 3-5 yards in each direction. • It is very important to talk with all your neighbors within your cat's normal home range as well as leave them with a flyer or business card. • Some useful questions to ask are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have they ever seen your cat in their yard? If yes, definitely ask to search the yard yourself. ○ On the day your cat went missing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did they hear or see anything out of the ordinary such as cat fights? ▪ Did they do any yard work or otherwise leave any shed, garage or basement doors open? ▪ Did they have any service or construction vehicles at their home? ▪ Were they doing any construction on their home that your cat could have gotten trapped inside. ○ Have they recently adopted a new cat or dog that runs loose in the neighborhood or do they know of anyone else who has? ○ Have they recently seen any predators in the neighborhood? ○ Have they recently had any pest control services at their home and/or put out any poison? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Please be aware that Cocoa Mulch, which is used in gardens and smells like chocolate, is toxic to dogs and cats. ○ Have they smelled any foul odors coming from under their house or in their yard?

IV. Checking Sightings

- When you receive a call about a potential sighting, try and get as much detail as possible about the location. Also ask if you could get the caller's name and phone number in case you need to call them back for additional information.
- Do not provide too much detail about your cat's appearance, and don't use leading questions.
 - Do ask "Does the cat you saw have white front paws?"
 - Instead ask "What color were the cat's front paws?"
- If possible, withhold at least one identifying characteristic of your cat's appearance. This can help you rule out any potential scammers.
- The best tool in this case is a photo line-up.
 - Copy a series of pictures of your cat and other cats that look somewhat like her. You can get these other pictures off the internet. See if the potential witness can correctly pick your cat out of the line-up of pictures.
 - Some people prefer to also bring along a collection of additional pictures of their cat to further confirm identity.
- If possible, meet the potential witness where they saw the cat.
 - Show them pictures of your cat to help confirm identity or use a photo line-up.
 - Make sure to leave them with a flyer or business card.
 - Ask them to contact you immediately if they have another sighting and not to try and catch your cat themselves.
 - You might ask them to try and get a picture of your cat if they can't get in touch with you. Many people have cameras on their phones or you could give them a disposable camera.
- Actions to take at the location of a potential sighting:
 - Distribute flyers in the area to see if anyone else has a cat that looks like yours. However, also keep in mind that this does not rule out that your cat may also be in the area.
 - Put up a few posters in the area.
 - Try "Simply Sitting."
 - Put up a surveillance camera and some food to try and get confirmation that it is your cat. This can then be followed up with a humane trap.
- Sometimes you may receive numerous sightings and it is hard to know where to focus. One option here is to hire a search dog team to check and verify several sightings.
- Make sure that you always keep supplies in your car when checking sightings in case you see your cat!

V. If You See Your Cat

- Do not loudly call his name or try to approach him. Never try to chase your cat!
- Preferably sit down and don't face him directly.
- Talk in your "indoor voice" using any pet names or familiar phrases that might help him recognize you.
- Try to remain calm and remember to breathe! Slow eye blinks and yawns are calming signals for cats. You can try to use these too.
- Set out some smelly food nearby and then sit down at least 10-20 feet away (again not facing him directly).
- If possible, make sure that you have a towel or pillowcase to hold him after you pick him up in case he panics. Even if he loves you very much, he may panic and scratch or even bite.
- Try and be patient. It can take an hour or more to coax a cat out of hiding.
- If your cat still won't approach you, then you could set out a humane trap. Depending on how frightened your cat appears, you could either sit nearby (at least 10-20 feet away) or sit in your car and watch the trap.
- Bring some Feliway (a synthetic copy of the feline facial pheromone, used by cats to mark their territory as safe and secure) to spray on yourself or in the trap to attempt to calm your cat.

Release of Liability: Lost Pet Research & Recovery accepts no liability for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of information provided in this search action plan. By reading and using this plan, you are releasing Lost Pet Research & Recovery and the distributors of this plan from all liability and accepting full responsibility for the search for your lost cat.

If you find the search plan overwhelming, consider contacting Lost Pet Research & Recovery (<http://lostpetresearch.com>) for assistance in managing and prioritizing your search actions based on your unique situation. Lost Pet Research & Recovery also offers phone and email consultations and on-site services such as assistance searching, rental of humane traps and surveillance cameras, assistance trapping extremely skittish cats, and creation of highly effective lost pet posters and flyers. On-site assistance is only available in the northeast US.

If you would like even more detailed instructions on how to find and catch your lost cat, consider purchasing the Lost Pet Recovery Online Instructions: <https://lostpetresearch.com/product/lost-pet-recovery-instructions/>. Get \$10 OFF when you use code SPSAVE\$10 at checkout!

Appendix A – Example Poster and Flyer

Example Small Poster

\$250 REWARD

For Information Leading to Return



Long Hair Gray Tabby

413-367-7171

Example Flyer

Please help us find “Spirit”
\$250 REWARD for information leading to return



White with Brown-Gray on Head and Tail

LOST July 4 area of Main and Canal St, S. Hadley

Very shy! - Please do not approach or try to catch him

CALL or TEXT if Seen 413-367-7171

Please check your garages, sheds or basements for Spirit if they were open since he went missing. If possible, please check under any porches, sheds or decks where he may be hiding.

For more info, visit us on Facebook @LostCatSpirit

or email Info@LostPetResearch.com

Please take a photo of this flyer with your cell phone so you'll have it on-hand