

## **A GUIDE TO FINDING YOUR LOST INDOOR CAT**

**Behavior:** One must understand Indoor cats go into a fight or flight mode when outside.

They MAY or may not recognize their name or your face. They WILL recognize, in most cases, sounds or smells: the sound of a food can opening, favorite toy, etc.

Take a moment and think of all the sounds that perk up their ears and make them come running to you. If you cannot take the sounds with you, record them on your smart phone and play them back around your house. Your cat will typically hunker down within just a few hundred yards from your home unless spooked. Take a flashlight, get under bushes, decks, ANY place they could get their head into. They maybe in sheds behind garbage cans, in hollowed out trees. Look, call and bate near storm drains. Storm drains are very small and dark places for a cat to hide. Note: Cats have a floating collarbone that allows them to get there body into any space where their head can get through.

Indoor cats lost outside become active in the evening usually around 7pm-5am. The best times for you to call names, make sounds, flashlight shining of eyes and have active searches 11pm – 2am. Get permission from your neighbors to look around their yards. Going onto someone's land my start and argument that could scare your cat away. Use the daytime to post flyers make calls and engage others to help search. Enlist help of Neighbors and people walking dogs, the more eyes the better. Make sure they have your number. If trapping ask Neighbors to only put out water not food. Let your cat find food in the traps. (More details below)

**Trapping:**Get humane traps (Google hunting supply stores) and place them close to the house or tree lines with favorite foods. (sardines are also a great lure). Place the food outside the trap a few feet away eventually bringing it closer and closer before putting food in the trap. In the trap put down 2 pages of newspaper the width of the trap. Lay very small chunks of food and food oil to a large portion of food at the back so the cat can trip the plate. Place one page from the back over the trip plate. Place the 2<sup>nd</sup> page behind the trip plate to the door. This prevents a smart cat from pulling the food to them easily. This helps hid the fact that it is a trap.

Scent Strips and baiting: Cut up some scent strips out of your old cloths or bed sheets etc. (one inch by three-inch strips) hang them low to the ground but high enough for the wind to take the smell. (I wore a shirt for 5 days to make it smell as strong as I could.) The smell can last 3-5 days. Cats can smellover a mile depending on wind conditions. Then make the scent strip and "Cat Chum" (Described below)trails back in the most directand safe way to your house and/or traps. Do not lay Scent strips and Cat Chum on top of each other. You can and should use both but keep them at least three or more feet apart.

Also if possible, leave windows open in your house at night, sometimes your cat is unable to remember what house the smell of the house in the night air draws them to home.

**Cat Chum:**Mix a gallon of water with 1-2 cans of tuna/sardines. Make straight lines of chum to the trap/house. DO NOT place your scent strips in your chum mix when laying them down. When laying down scent lines concentrate it near the opening of the trap and run it in a straight-line way using less and less as you get further away. Find places to make small pools, discarded bags, cups etc.

**Litter:**Put the UNCLEANED litterbox outside. For Multi-cat homes take the litter, bag itthen place the litter out further away from your strips and chum. It is usually more pungent, making the scent go further.

**Making Cat Shelter:** Get/use a small cat carrier that is just big enough for your cat. Place a blanket that smells like you inside. Place the carrier under cover somewhere tight and dark if possible. Leave the door open. Cover it with another blanket that smells like you to protect it from the elements. Place food and water just outside of the open door. Place a favorite toy inside. When approaching the shelter do it slowly and from the front. Calling softly, shine a flashlight inside and look for the eyes.

**Tracking:** Do NOT chase them. If you hear or see them REMAIN CALM sit down, softly call their name, make the sound they recognize, open food and LET THEM COME TO YOU. It may take hours even if you are within 10 feet of each other. Fight every urge to get closer or chase. Try to have someone keep everyone else from checking out what you are doing. (See story below)

Use a flashlight to shine eyes(can cause them to just freeze in place) then use sounds and food to try to lure the cat in between 11pm and 2am. Listen for meows and movement every now and then while tracking the cat.

Our 4<sup>th</sup> night after our cat disappeared, a neighbor called us at 10:30 pm with a sighting. I took my flash light and found eyes looking back at me. I fought my urge to rush in and grab her. I sat down and started calling. I could not remember any other thing to do for the first few moments other than SIT DOWN and call her name softly. The other things started to come back to mind in short order. I was about to call my wife to bring the food and toys, until the neighbor came down the path and freaked out the cat. (Again, go out in pairs to prevent such mistakes and for personal safety.)

Do NOT chase your cat through woods. You will only drive them further in. Stay on paths and open areas if you must go in. Stay on the tree line - Chum/scent and trap along the tree line. Hide your traps just inside the tree line to keep them hidden for your pet and from people who may take them.

Hire a good dog tracking team, (DO NOT hire any team that will chase the cat or won't let you come with the team) Do research on the companies. We used DogsFindingDogs. (Call them even if you are not in their area they may be able to help find you a team.) **NOTE:** We would not have been looking in the right place if not for this tracking team.

File missing pet reports with all the animal control agencies in your area. Post fliers at Vets offices and everywhere within a mile in any direction. Call these places daily. Fliers should color with accurate colors and description of your cat. Do not give your address or amount of reward. Do give your phone number but do NOT pay anyone without seeing your cat EVER.

Many big housing complexes have community mailboxes post on the left and right side of the mailbox so that people approaching from either side can see the flier. Never give/send money without seeing your cat.

Is a house under construction or having work done? Your cat may hitch a ride in one of the trucks. Check the trucks and/or call the contractors. Find out where the truck went. Then look and trap in those areas too. Check the house that is having work done. Check under the dumpsters.

It can take some time for your cat to feel secure enough to come out of hiding. I am not going to lie and tell you this is a quick process, in some cases up to a year. Stay strong and positive when tracking. Have your breakdowns and crying moments during the day in your house. NEVER while you are tracking. Indoor cats are looking for home keep that in mind. They need you to help them get past their instincts to get home.

From here you will have to decide what to do and it will depend a lot of your cat behavior (how afraid is he/she, how easily scared can he/she become, is he/she familiar with being outside, etc). This stuff worked for us, it took 18 days and nights but it worked.

My wife, our reunited cat and I ask that Pet owners and administrators post and re-post this, give it to Vets and shelters in their area, Please help us help others bring their cats home.