

Lost and Found

I snuggled in for a dark evening on the couch when the dogs set to barking like fools and charged the front door. I straightened up and listened—not a sound. “Girls,” I said, “it’s nothing. Relax.” Ready to spend the long winter’s night in the company of a book about cats, I wanted the dogs to settle quietly with me. Instead, they renewed their efforts, woofing and whining up a storm. I pushed my book aside, stood up and walked over, ready to demonstrate that nothing amiss needed their attention—or mine. Both dogs upped the ante, jockeying for position before I even had a hand on the knob. “Girls!” I exclaimed, exasperated. I grabbed the collar of one dog while blocking escape by the other with my legs and pulled the door open just a crack.

Sitting at polite attention on the covered front porch, a Cockapoo wagged his tail and stared up at me. Rain poured and the temperature hovered above freezing. I shooed the dog inside where light illuminated a once fuzzy white dog turned stringy brown. “You’ve been on walk-about, haven’t you?” I leaned down to examine his collar. A current tag meant one phone call and a short drive later, the muddy pup was in the arms of the crying woman who had searched for him since workers at the house inadvertently let him out early that morning. I recalled another story in my neighborhood where days of desperate searching did not end as well.



PETLANDIA

by Mary Mandeville, DC

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Keeping pets safe begins with the environment. The outside area should be secure—no exceptions. A fence might need to be 6 or 8 feet tall in the case of a jumper, or extend underground in the case of a digger. On our fence, spring-loaded gates close automatically. We don’t trust our dogs to a parade of plumbers, carpenters or electricians. Even with good intentions, a dog or cat can easily slip out unnoticed while a heavy load of sheetrock is wrestled through an open doorway. During home re-

modeling projects or noisy holidays, I simply take the dogs wherever I go; they enjoy hanging out in the car. If weather extremes preclude vehicle trips, the cost of doggie daycare—boarding at a canine or feline facility—pales in comparison with lost-dog reward money, veterinary bills or the ongoing agony of imagining a best friend alone, exposed or injured without help.

Identification is critical to finding a lost animal companion. A collar with up-to-date tags or a phone number stitched right in may speed return and prevent a frightening trip to the pound. Never leave an unattended animal in a choke collar, which will strangle her if she becomes caught on a fence, branch or other object. One of my clients’ dogs got lost wearing a walking harness, only to be found two months later at half his original weight with wounds where the straps had cut down to his ribs. Never able to tell his story, he simply breathed his last in the safe harbor of his beloved person. The image haunts me still; I leave my dogs in flat collars they could wriggle out of if necessary. Each dog has an implanted microchip as a back-up plan. No deleterious health effects have plagued our electronically identified canine pals and I have returned more than a few lost dogs via this simple technology.

If despite your best efforts, fireworks, thunderstorms or other misadventures cause your dog or cat to become lost, spring into immediate

action. Contact local veterinary offices and emergency clinics. Notify all area shelters and local animal control agencies. Multnomah County (MCAC) maintains a lost-and-found listing; check it regularly. Post a notice on Craigs List and utilize other electronic media. Go door to door with photos of your missing animal, post fliers in your area and talk to everyone; your animal is on the street, you need to be there too.

If you find a lost animal, get involved. Do not chase a stray, offer sanctuary instead. A warm car with an open door, a soft voice, averted eyes and food if you have it may create just the space a frightened animal needs. Unless you have certain knowledge of abandonment, presume the animal has a loving home and make every effort to get her there.

The following announcement appeared via fax at my chiropractic office as follow-up to a previous heartbreaking lost-dog notice.

Four months, two weeks, twelve hours, and twenty-seven minutes after he slipped out the door in a storm, our beloved shepherd was returned to our front porch on Christmas Eve. Thanks to everyone who lent a hand. Our hearts are filled with gratitude.

Effort may be rewarded even when hope wanes. Keep searching and keep helping. ☐

MARY MANDEVILLE can be found on the web at marymandeville.com.

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