

What to Do When You Find a Homeless Cat

While some stray cats are abandoned by their human families, many are lost. A little detective work will help determine whether the cat you've found has been abandoned or is lost and what your next steps should be. In the meantime, the cat should be kept separated for you other pets.

Is The Cat Lost?

Unfortunately, most pet owners do not provide their cats with collars and ID tags. If the cat you find does have tags, the owner can be notified from this information. The issuer of a rabies or city license tag can also provide the owner's name, address, and phone no. The issuer's phone no. should be on the rabies tag.

If the Cat Does Not Have any Identification

- Take the cat to a local veterinarian or animal shelter to have it scanned for a microchip. Call your local animal shelters and humane societies; some have computerized lost and found services.
- Put up signs in the neighborhood in which you found the cat; watch for lost cat signs.
- Place found ads in your local newspapers- many papers run these ads free of charge.
- Check the paper daily for "Lost Cat" ads that may describe the cat.
- Check with children in your neighborhood. They are great resources.
- If you have the internet and/or Facebook –use that to place an ad or check the Lost Pets websites.

If you have no response from these steps, you can safely assume the cat is truly homeless. WHAT NEXT?

Should You Keep The Cat?

Should you decide to provide a home for the cat yourself, your first step is to take her to a veterinarian for a complete examination. The veterinarian can tell you the cat's approximate age, physical condition, and sex. He/she can also let you know what vaccinations are needed, what kind of diet to provide, and when to have the cat neutered or spayed (if it was not done already). It is a good idea to take a fresh stool sample along with you to be checked for internal parasites.

What Should You Do if You Cannot Keep The Cat?

If you are unable to keep the cat, please don't assume that the local humane society will be able to find a good home for it. In addition to the placement rate for adult cats being very low, millions of healthy adult cats, as well as kittens, must be euthanized (killed before they would die naturally) because there are just not enough homes for all of them.

To find the best possible home for the cat, you should plan on doing the work for yourself. Give yourself plenty of time because finding a responsible home for the cat cannot be done overnight. It will be easier if you have the cat vaccinated and spayed or neutered first.

1. Advertise

The best home would be with friends or family members whom you trust. If their homes are already "full," expand your search to your place of work or school. Ask if anyone knows of someone who is looking for a cat. Post notices on bulletin boards near lunchrooms, in veterinary clinics, pet supply stores, and grocery stores. Your notices should be neat, specific, eye-catching, and uncluttered. A photograph of the cat along with a catch phrase such as "this cat wants you", will attract attention. Provide the cat's name (if you have selected one), color, age, sex, neuter status, and lovable characteristics. Include information on how you can be contacted. It is

unwise to put your address on any notice seen by the public; giving only a phone number allows you to screen callers before scheduling appointments.

Newspaper ads in daily papers, shopping guides, and neighborhood weeklies can be effective. Keep your ad brief, yet informative. Also you can use Facebook or other social media sites. *Stay away from “Craig’s List” or similar sites. They attract irresponsible or undesirable people.* Do not use “Free kitten” or “Free Cat” ads, as they can attract irresponsible or undesirable pet owners; those unable to provide routine veterinary care for the cat, those who would sell the cat to a research facility, or those who would use the cat in training dogs for fighting. A fee of \$25.00 or more will help discourage these types of inquiries. Your offer to provide basic initial vaccinations and neuter may cost you a few dollars, but the investment is well worth it for the cat, and for your peace of mind.

2. Interview

The potential adopter’s response to the following questions over the phone will help determine if you wish to set up an appointment for the family to meet the cat.

- Do you currently have a cat? If yes, why do you want another cat?
- If no, have you ever had a cat before? If yes, what happened to her?
- What other pets do you have?
- When were your present pets last vaccinated?
- When were your present pets neutered?
- Did you know it could take two to four weeks for all pets to adjust?
- What do the other members of your family think about getting a cat?
- Do you rent or own? How does your landlord feel about your having pets?
- Do you have children? If yes, what ages and have they ever been around cats?

If you feel comfortable with the answers to these questions, make an appointment (set a specific time) for the prospective owner(s) to meet the cat. At that time, observe how all the family members interact with the cat, especially children. Do they demonstrate respect toward the cat, making a gentle self-introduction by allowing the cat to take the initiative for touching? Trust your intuition- remember not to feel obligated to adopt the cat to the first family or person you interview.

The prospective adopter will want to know all about the cat. Tell her everything you have learned about the cat in your short time together. Clearly state any conditions you may require of a potential adopter (i.e. neutering, indoors only, no declawing, etc.)

3. Adoption!

A written agreement is common at most animal shelters and it may also work well for you. Include all conditions you want the adopter to meet in this agreement, a description of the cat, the date, amount paid for the cat, and the signature of the adopter and yourself. Let the potential adopters know you value the cat; and if the situation doesn’t work out for the cat or the people after a period of time (suggest a two to four week adjustment period), let them know that the cat can be returned to you. You may want to check their I.D. for current address and take their home and work phone numbers.

Maintain contact with the new adopters to assure yourself that you have found the best possible home for the cat. After the entire process is completed you will be better prepared for the next homeless cat that finds you.