

Tips to Find Your Lost Cat



Understand the Silence Factor

The Silence Factor is used to describe the behavior when a sick, injured, or panicked cat will hide in silence. As a natural form of protection, a cat will find a place to hide under a house, deck, porch, bushes, culvert or any place they can crawl into or under. A sick, injured, or panicked cat will remain in hiding and silent in order to stay safe from predators. The Silence Factor *kills many cats* because while the cat is sick or injured and hiding under a neighbor's deck, cat owners don't know that they need to aggressively search the immediate area while understanding that the cat might be close by, but hiding in silence. Your own cat probably will not respond to you. Cats can and will hide in silence for days and weeks – often dying of thirst and starvation rather than expose themselves to possible predators.

When an outdoor-access cat disappears, it means that something has happened to the cat to interrupt its behavior of coming home. Cats are territorial and they do not just run away from home like dogs do.

Lost cat posters will not always help find your cat if it has crawled under somewhere and the silence factor is in play. Lost cat posters should be used, but only as a supplement to an aggressive search of the cat's territory. You must look under and in every conceivable hiding place in your yard and in your neighbors' yards. Check inside sheds, buildings and garages – a cat could have entered, hid when the door was shut and be trapped inside.

If you've lost a cat that is allowed outdoors part-time or for brief periods of time and he/she has vanished, then it is possible that he/she is not missing, but is hiding in fear. That's because even outdoor-access cats can become displaced from their territory. A cat can become "displaced" into unfamiliar territory when chased off (such as attacked by another cat, chased by a dog or predator) and he/she ends up in a yard or area that is totally foreign to him/her. In many cases lost cats were actually only five houses away or a block away, hiding inside a neighbor's yard in fear because they were disoriented and unable (or unwilling because of fear) to return home.

When an indoor-only cat escapes outside (or when any cat is displaced into an unfamiliar area), the cat is likely hiding (usually near the escape point) in fear. That is because cats are territorial and your cat's territory was inside of your home. Once a cat is transplanted into unfamiliar territory, it seeks shelter because it is afraid. Cats that are afraid (and cats that are injured) will seek areas of concealment such as under a deck, under a house, under a porch, or in heavy brush and **they will not meow!** Meowing would give up their location to a predator. Their behavior has nothing to do with whether the cat loves you, whether it recognizes your voice, or whether it can smell you--it has everything to do with the fact that a frightened cat will hide in silence! The Silence Factor is the cat's way of staying safe!

Again, lost cats are generally found no further than five houses away or a block away, hiding inside a neighbor's yard in fear because they were disoriented and unable (or unwilling because of fear) to return home.

Steps to Take

1. Do NOT put the litter box out. Leading experts in lost pet recovery never recommend putting the litter box outside. Cats bury their waste for a reason. The litter box can attract other cats or predators who will harm your cat. The litter box is a terrible myth that just won't die.
2. Check your house thoroughly if you did not actually see your cat escape outside. Open every closet and drawer and use a flashlight to see into dark corners. Check everywhere in your house several times.
3. Go outside and look. Softly call your cat and shake a container of treats. Look up in trees. Check every single place a cat could possibly fit – such as, bushes, under sheds, brush piles.
4. Use a flashlight (even in the day time) and shine it into dark areas. An animal's eyes will reflect the light from your flashlight.
5. Alert your neighbors. Ask your neighbors to allow you onto their property to check under decks, sheds, in garages, bushes etc. Don't expect your neighbors to do as thorough of a search as you would do for your cat.
6. Post information on your social media page (make sure it is public) then share your post to local groups. Update your post as necessary.
7. Notify Animal Control.
8. While you are waiting for a trap to be set up by a professional, set up a feeding station at location near where cat escaped. Put really smelly food at that location. Replace food as necessary. If you have security cameras, use them to monitor the feeding station.
9. Create a poster. The poster can be 8 ½ x 14 – best size is 11 x 17 printed at local print shop such as Staples. An 8 ½ x 11-inch piece of paper is not large enough to use. If you can, have posters laminated so rain doesn't ruin them.

Include:

- a. Clear photo of your cat
 - b. Color(s)
 - c. Sex
 - d. Age and weight
 - e. Street Location, City, ST cat is missing from
 - f. Additional info such as color of collar and/or harness, whether or not cat is micro chipped
 - g. Date Missing
 - h. Phone number(s) to call
10. Immediately hang the posters at least within a three-mile radius of where your cat went missing to reach many people.
- a. Hang posters at intersections and so they can be seen on all sides by drivers.
 - b. Staple all four corners to prevent the poster from curling and being unreadable.

- c. Hang the posters at a height at which both an SUV driver and a compact vehicle driver can read them.

11. Consider using a Humane Live Trap. Live traps have been used to recover of thousands of missing cats. See the section later in this document about how to safely use a trap:

12. Be patient. It may take some days or even weeks before you successfully trap your cat. Don't give up too soon. Don't assume a predator took your cat and give up. Cats can successfully avoid predators using the Silence Factor.

Sample Poster

Preparation for Trapping

IMPORTANT. No animal can be left in trap for more than a few minutes. Animals can injure or kill themselves trying to escape. In extreme weather, an animal could die.

Note: a trained professional will never set a trap without a camera monitoring it and someone able to reach trap in minutes.

If you are setting the trap yourself and not with the help of a trained professional - you must be able to monitor the trap. The trap must be monitored 24/7 via a camera that immediately sends info to your phone. Use a security camera or trail camera and set it to notify you immediately. Leave your phone on 24/7.

Someone must be available on site to reach the trap within minutes if an animal is trapped.

If you cannot monitor and reach the trap, you have no business setting a trap up!

Supplies for Trapping

1. Really smelly food such as canned mackerel, tuna or sardines.
2. Spoon to get food out of the can.
3. Plastic bag to put empty food container and any trash into.
4. Small food container that will fit behind the trip plate in trap and not interfere with the mechanism.
5. Trap
6. Camera with fresh batteries
7. Cloth to line the bottom of the trap.
8. Flashlight
9. Your Phone so you can check your camera on the App.

Setting the Trap

1. Choose a location that is near point of escape and offers some cover for the cat. Bushes are often places where cats hide and provide good camouflage for the trap.
2. Avoid setting the trap up out in the open. Chose a location where the trap will not be noticed by passersby (who may not understand that you are not trying to harm the cat).
3. Fold and place the cloth on the bottom of the trap inside the door and just covering the trip plate. Cats don't like walking on the wire surface and the cloth helps to keep their feet off the wire. It also helps prevent their feet from going through when you pick up the trap. Be sure that the cloth does not extend beyond the trip plate or block the door from closing.
4. Set trap on level ground so it doesn't wobble.

5. Spoon a small amount of food into a container and place it the back of the trap behind the trip plate. You want the cat to go all the way to the back of the trap so it will step on the trip plate. Make sure the container does not interfere with the trip plate. If you have trouble with the container interfering with the trip plate, put the food on a piece of paper or paper towel.
6. Set up your camera on the ground pointed at the side of the trap. Place it so you get a side view of the entire trap including the door.
7. Test the camera and make sure it is working and that you have the correct view of the trap.
8. Set the trap to capture. Then leave the area and monitor the trap with your camera.

Monitoring the Trap

Again, never leave traps unmonitored. A trapped animal is vulnerable. Passersby may release the cat or steal the trap!

As soon as the cat is trapped, completely cover the trap and bring the trap inside your home to release the cat.

Of course, there is always the chance that you will catch some other wild animal attracted to the food or an unintended cat. Simply release the animal quietly. Make sure the spot you pick for release does not encourage the animal to run into danger like a busy street to get away from you. If you are using a TruCatch trap, simply roll the trap upside down and the door will open. Keep the trap covered until you are ready to release. The animal will probably bolt immediately out of the trap. If it doesn't leave right away, just leave the area and wait for the animal to leave. Never put your hand in the trap!

Compliments of Karen J. Moulton of Farmington Valley Lost Pet Recovery www.lostpetfv.com