

Preventing Your Dog from Going Missing

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FARMINGTON VALLEY LOST PET RECOVERY

Farmington Valley Lost Pet Recovery

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LOST DOG
DO NOT CHASE

Breed
Grey/White
Female
10 yrs - 14 lbs

Missing since (date) (where)

860 123-4567

Poster will be removed when dog is found. Farmington Valley Lost Pet Recovery

Hundreds of dogs go missing each year in Connecticut. Some are never found. What I found lacking in our state was comprehensive information on prevention. The information here describes proven techniques to use to prevent your dog from going missing .



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Preventing Your Dog from Going Missing

You are responsible for keeping your dog safe.

BE AWARE OF PREDATORS

Many predators live among us. *Predators are out there 24/7 and are everywhere – every town – every neighborhood.* ALL dogs and cats are at risk from predators. Packs of coyotes can and will attack and kill dogs of all sizes. Packs of coyotes kill adult deer so don't think your dog is safe from coyotes. Keep your dog on leash and be aware of your surroundings. Your job is to protect your dog from becoming the victim of a predator.

Predators in Neighborhood

These predators live among us and are a danger to pets. Predators are not afraid of humans and will attack your pet when you are nearby.

Keep cats indoors and dogs on leash at ALL times. Do not put dogs outside alone. Cats, small dogs, and senior dogs are particularly at risk. Never put a small or senior dog outside alone. It only takes an instant for a predator to take your pet. It happens all the time and it is preventable.



Coyote - Danger to Cats and Dogs of All Sizes - Will Attack Large Dogs. Active During Day and Night



Bobcat - Danger to Cats and Small Dogs - Active During Day and Night



Fisher - Danger to Cats and Dogs. Active during Day and Night



Fox - Danger to Cats and Small Dogs - Active During Day and Night



Great Horned Owl - Active Only at Night
Danger to Cats and Small Dogs



Hawks & Eagles - Danger to Cats and Small Dogs - Active Only During Day

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Though black bears are not considered predators, they can and will kill dogs. If a dog chases a bear or gets between mother and cubs, the result can be deadly. In the valley a few dogs – one a 90 lb. dog have been killed by bears.

WARNING ABOUT TRUSTING FENCES OR TIE OUTS

Important – Fences and tie outs do not keep out predators.

Predators can easily climb or dig under a 6-foot fence.



Electric underground fences offer no protection at all. Predators can take your dog from your yard in a heartbeat.

Never put a dog outside alone on an electric underground fence. Small dogs should be leashed, and you should be always holding the end of that leash even with a physical fence. I can't tell you how many small dogs on underground fences vanish without a trace. Fact is – the dog didn't leave the yard on its own – a predator took it.

Never put a dog out alone on a tie out. One case I worked on was for a small dog who was tied out off the back door. The owner had tied the dog out like that for years despite being warned by Animal Services to stop doing it. When I got there, the evidence told a horrific story. The dog's torn harness was still attached to the tie out. Coyote tracks led from the torn harness into the swamp behind the house in broad daylight. No one heard a sound. The dog was never seen again.

Don't let a fence or tie out give you a false sense of security. Always supervise your dog.

MAINTAIN FENCES

1. **Check your electric fence and collar batteries!** If you are going to use electric fencing, maintain it. Check your electric fence and collar regularly to be sure the system is working properly. In winter, extreme cold weather can cause batteries to die quicker than normal. Deep snow and snowbanks in driveways and yards could allow your dog to jump or walk over your invisible fence. Check the collar signal to make sure your dog cannot escape the yard. If you find a problem with the invisible fence, always keep your dog on a leash until you remedy the situation. 
2. **Look for holes/gaps in your physical fence or any digging underneath the fence.** Make sure nothing is positioned next to the fence that your dog can climb on and use to get over the fence. Make sure nothing is on the outside of the fence that could make it easier for a predator to climb over the fence into the yard. Note: coyotes and bobcats can easily climb fences. In winter, deep snow and snowbanks in driveways and yards could allow your dog to jump or walk over your fence. If your dog might be able to get over the fence, always keep your dog on a leash until you remedy the situation. 

KEEP YOUR DOG ON LEASH

Off leash dogs can take off in an instant. Do not let your dog off the leash. Your dog may leave the yard to go exploring or to follow a scent, person, dog, cat, or to chase wildlife. Something might scare your dog – gunfire, fireworks, a car backfiring, another dog ... You may or may not be able to call your dog back to you, but why take the risk? Dogs can and will chase deer for miles. A frightened dog can run for miles and days, weeks, even months. Chasing a bear can be deadly.

I can't tell you how many dogs disappeared because they were off leash.

NOTE: Off leash dogs are at risk of being attacked or killed by predators or bears, hit by cars, or stolen.



TRAIN YOUR DOG

1. **Train your dog to come when called.** Teach your dog to come when called so that if he/she starts to run off, you *might* be able to call the dog back to you. You need to train your dog to come when called in all sorts of situations and work on this skill diligently for months before you *could* have a dog that is fairly reliable at coming when called. Remember – dogs are not programmable machines and every dog, no matter how well trained, can decide NOT to come. When hiking, keep a long line on your dog so you have a way to stop your dog should she start to take off.
2. **Train your dog not to go through an open door, crate door, car door or gate without your permission.** If your dog knows this rule and obeys it, you have a better chance of your dog not seeing the open door or gate as an opportunity to bolt.



SUPERVISE YOUR DOG

Never leave your dog outside alone. Dogs left outside are at risk of running off, being stolen, and being attacked by predators or other dogs. No dog should ever be left outside alone. Predators can jump and climb very high fences and come out of the sky. Go outside with your dog and when you come in, bring in your dog.

Several dogs in the Farmington Valley went missing and were never found because owners put the dogs outside alone. In several cases, the dogs were taken by coyotes. In most of those cases, the owners told me they knew coyotes were around. Yet they put their dog outside alone anyway.

CHECK AND SECURE DOORS AND GATES

1. **Check your doors and gates to be sure they latch properly when closed.** Many dogs have escaped by pushing on a door or gate that did not latch properly.
2. **If your dog knows how to open doors and gates, then you need to install** childproof devices. Some dogs are very adept at opening gates and doors.

SECURE YOUR DOG IN A VEHICLE

Dogs should always be secured in a vehicle for many reasons. Use a crate or a dog seatbelt in the back seat to secure your dog. Never put your dog in the front seat. If your airbag deploys, it could kill or severely injure your dog. Unsecured dogs can:

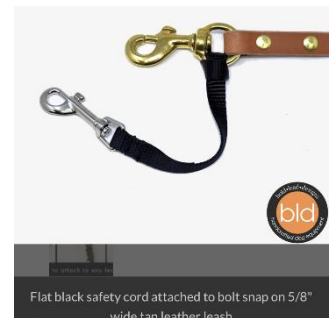
- Jump or fall out of an open window.
- Bolt from your car if you are in an accident.
- Be injured by being thrown around the car.
- Jump out of an open car door.

I've seen the horrific aftermath of a dog who bolted out of a car at a gas station. She didn't survive running up on the highway. I've also seen the results of dogs jumping or falling out of open car windows.



COLLARS, HARNESSES, AND LEASHES

1. **Check your dog's collar and/or harness regularly** to make sure it is not worn or loose enough that your dog can slip out of it.
2. **Buy a martingale collar if you have a dog that tries to back up or throw her head to get out of a collar.** A martingale collar is designed to tighten if a dog tries to back out of it and throw off the collar. Martingales are good to use for fearful or skittish dogs who may get frightened and back out of a collar. Many dogs have escaped when they were frightened and backed out of their collars. A frightened dog is going to run away quickly and become lost.
3. **Have a safety system on your dog. This is especially important if you have a newly adopted dog.** Put both a harness and collar on the dog. Either attach a leash to each piece of equipment so you have two leashes on the dog or attach the harness to the collar using a specially made safety cord. Then attach the leash to either the harness or collar. That way if one piece of equipment fails, you have a backup to keep your dog safe.
4. **Check your leash to be sure it is not frayed or chewed and that the clip is functioning properly.** Never let your dog chew on the leash. I have seen dogs bite a leash in half in one bite and take off.



IDENTIFICATION TAGS, MICROCHIPS, AND GPS TRACKERS

1. **Put an identification tag on your dog's collar** (which should be always worn) with your name, address, and cell phone number. Do this even if your dog is micro chipped. It is quicker for a finder to read a phone number on a tag and call you than waiting for someone to scan the microchip.
2. **License your dog and put the license tag on your dog's collar.** Not only is it the law, but it is also another way for someone to identify the owner of a found dog. Using the license tag number, local police/animal control officers can look up who owns the dog.
3. **Microchip your dog.** Your veterinarian can microchip your dog. There are also low-cost clinics that offer microchipping. Remember to register your chip number with the company that made the chip. If you move, update your address and phone number.
4. **Buy a GPS tracker for your dog's collar that will let you know if the dog leaves your property and tell you where the dog is.** Several GPS products are now available. I have Fi GPS collars on my dogs.

BE PREPARED

1. **Have clear photographs of your dog** - take head shots and body shots that show the shape and size of your dog- ready to use for a missing pet alert if your dog goes missing.
2. **Prepare a missing dog flyer that can be updated quickly if your dog goes missing.** Prepare a flyer with general information about your dog and save it on your computer. IF your dog goes missing, you can quickly update the flyer with current information and get the word out.



IF YOU USE A DOG WALKER, PET SITTER, OR BOARDING FACILITY

If you leave your dog in the care of someone, make sure you him/her give a copy of this booklet, the missing dog flyer file, and the photographs of your dog. Instruct your dog's caregiver to notify you immediately if your dog goes missing and either you or the caregiver should begin to get the word out about your missing pet.

If you use a dog walker, pet sitter, or boarding facility, what measures do they take to prevent your dog from escaping? Ask your dog care providers what measures they take to prevent your dog from going missing in their care. What safety equipment do you provide?

A 20 lb. dog slipped her collar and went missing in October 2023 from a local in-home boarding business. She was never found. The boarding business owner never even shared the missing dog flyer on social media. Letting the public know she lost a client's dog would be bad for business.

The caregiver should have your dog secured and kept safe by:

1. Using a slip leash that dog can't back out of.
2. Double leashing your dog - a slip leash securely around neck and another leash attached to collar or harness or two regular leashes- one attached to collar and the other attached to a harness.
3. Using a \$7 safety cord that connects the harness and collar with leash attached to harness or collar. If one piece of equipment fails, the dog is still attached by safety cord.
4. Containing in a securely fenced-in yard that dog cannot climb over or dig under.
5. Leashing the dog even in fenced yard.
6. Supervising the dog outside by going outside with the dog – even in a fenced yard.
7. Using gates protecting doors to outside.

If your dog caregiver doesn't have such safety protocols, then your dog is at risk in their care. Ask your caregiver about their safety protocols. If they don't have them, find another caregiver.

And stop hiring people who do it as a hobby because they love dogs and want to make extra money. Do they know how to keep your dog safe?

A hobby sitter left a client's dog in the care of her teenager when she went on errands. The teenager lost the dog who was gone for 10 days.

Stop paying people to take your dog on off leash adventures.

Last year a senior dog was lost for a couple days by a company getting paid to take the dog and several others to Nod Brook. Nod Brook isn't fenced and it's not a dog park.

Demand a higher standard of care for your dog. Your dog is dependent on you to keep them safe.

Contact Info for Farmington Valley Lost Pet Recovery



Farmington Valley Lost Pet Recovery offers services for owners of lost pets in the Farmington Valley only.

Farmington Valley Lost Pet Recovery offers:

- Onsite assistance, phone consultations for owners of lost pets in the Farmington Valley area to facilitate pet recovery via guidance in use of best practices.
- Offer effective missing pet flyer and poster design and placement.
- Use of trail cameras and humane trapping equipment.

I became a Missing Animal Technician after completing a 10-week program on missing animal recovery best practices and techniques in July 2014. I also participated in the Missing Animal Recovery (MAR K9) Boot Camp – a 3-day dog training event designed to meet the training needs of beginner, intermediate, and advanced MAR attendees in May 2014 with my dog Lyda.

I also have a background in K9 search for lost and deceased persons in Connecticut and am the author of "Preventing Your Dog from Becoming Missing. What To Do If Your Dog Is Missing."

Fee for services which basically covers the cost of trail camera plans, posters, batteries etc. The cost of recovering a lost dog should be paid by the owner of the dog. The business is NOT a non-profit, but donations toward equipment purchases are appreciated.

You can contact me at

fvlostpets@comcast.net - www.lostpetsfv.com