

From the Group Lost and Found Pets in Cambridge UK and Surrounding Areas (LFPCSA)

For anyone who's cat is Missing ! Why and where may they be, and what you should do to find them

1. A SOUND - Cats have extremely acute hearing and are naturally terrified of loud noises such as thunder, a car horn, a dog barking, a refuse lorry coming down the road emptying bins. The younger the cat the more easily they are scared by noises and bolt.

2. A LOCAL BOLD and DOMINANT CAT – will size up to a more timid cat to exert control over the territory.

3. An UN-NEUTERED MALE CAT will scare off all local cats in his endless searching over miles seeking a female. His instinct is to dominate in all territories and intimidate and fight with all local cats.

4. THE SUPER FRIENDLY CAT KNOWN TO EVERYONE: sometimes disappear on occasions for longer than normal as they are visiting many homes. They turn up suddenly as if nothing had happened. Cats are territorial and do not just run away from home. Something will have spooked the cat and it has bolted out of its familiar territory and ended up in a garden it has never been in before.

LOST CAT ADVICE

A CAT USED TO GOING OUTSIDE: something has happened to interrupt this, cats hide mostly when scared. They will be oblivious to the panic they have created.

INDOOR ONLY cat who has escaped is very different, it will be MUCH CLOSER to home in the first hiding space it can find. It will be terrified finding itself suddenly outside. It will hide immediately very nearby but too panicked to respond to being called.

A cat NEW TO AN AREA through moving house or being re-homed will also find being outside frightening and will hide away quickly and nearby.

MISSING CAT STUDY from Missing Animal Response Network -

A study of 1200 missing cats that were lost and then found.

- The majority of cats 75% were found within 500 metres (1/3 of a mile) of their home (or escape point). Indoor only cats were closest to home often up to 10 houses distance.

- The majority (83%) were found outside in a GARDEN near to home (or to their escape point) under shrubs or decking.

- The majority of cats that were found, were found within 8 weeks. Half of those found was within 7 days.

- Some bolder cats work their way home when their adrenaline has subsided (sometimes after a few days). Many cats will stay in hiding for very many days – often 10-12 days. They need our help to be reunited especially if they have bolted beyond their personal territory; they will be disorientated and unable to find their way back.

THINGS YOU SHOULD DO:

FIRST: SEARCH STRAIGHT AWAY and REGULARLY: Immediately search the local area. Call from your garden day and night. Walk the length of your road STOPPING and WAITING. Frightened cats take a while to respond. Start at the end of your road and WALK TOWARDS your house as you call so you don't tempt your cat to travel further away from its home. Do the same on parallel roads as many

times as possible every day. Don't give up as the majority of found cats are found within 2 months with 50% in the first 7 days.

Call in your normal voice so your cat is reassured that it is safe. They will pick up on the slightest anxiety as cats are hugely sensitive. Unless your cat is very bold, he/she will not rush straight out of hiding on hearing you; many stay in hiding for up to 12 days. Stand still and call. Build your cat's confidence by hearing your voice sounding relaxed, talking to switched off mobile as you walk towards home.

NIGHT-TIME/EARLY HOURS when the WORLD IS ASLEEP, when it is QUIET is a very good time to call and search. SOUND TRAVELS MUCH LONGER DISTANCES at night and your cat is much more likely to hear you calling it. CATS FEEL SAFER IN THE DARK from predators and are more likely to leave their hiding place on being called. Call in your garden frequently overnight. If walking on the street near your home to call through to reach neighbour's gardens; take someone with you to stay safe. Shaking a treat bag GENTLY is a signal to cats (if it's something they have heard at home) and the sound will travel much further late at night. Or take smelly fish or chicken.

Search at dusk and dawn

BE PATIENT; WAIT; REPEAT: Hiding away and not responding has nothing to do with whether your cat loves you, whether it recognises your voice – it has everything to do with the fact that a frightened cat will hide in silence! It is following its instinct and is in survival mode. Even if you are nearby the cat won't just come out. Search hiding places.

SMELLS LIKE HOME: Cats have a very good sense of smell. If possible, scatter a little of the content of your cat's litter tray in your garden – not too much as you may have to refresh it as time passes. If that is not an option, maybe find something else that has a smell the cat will recognise.

SECOND: PUBLICISE:

LEAFLET EVERY HOUSE. LEAFLETS are very successful and have resulted in reuniting quite a few cats. Leaflet both sides of your road and parallel streets. Include a clear full photograph of your cat and your mobile number. Ask them to search in their gardens, sheds and under decking.

Leaflets through doors really RAISES THE PROFILE of your lost cat in a large number of people's minds. It reaches so many people – literally many hundreds.

Make use of all social media. Post on Neighbourhood Watch, Next Door and local online Community Noticeboard. Give a poster to your postman, milkman and refuse collectors. Let your vet know he is missing and contact your chip company and make sure his details are up to date. I hope your cat is back home soon.