



We don't replace you — we empower you. *Your commitment fuels the search; our expertise strengthens it.* This is a true partnership, and your steady involvement is essential for a successful recovery. Without your commitment and physical involvement, we will not be in a position to take your case. Your dedication, paired with our experience, creates the strongest path forward. The first 24-48 hours of a lost dog's journey are the most critical. During this window, your dog is still close to the escape point, still settling into survival mode, and still highly influenced by familiar scents, routines, and patterns. **Your actions during this time can dramatically impact the outcome of your search.** This is why it is essential to begin the steps in this guide **immediately**. Every hour counts, and waiting for someone else to take the lead can delay the most important early efforts.

Do **not** wait for a volunteer to contact you before you begin. Start working on this checklist right away. Your dog needs you to take the first steps now — not later.

Our volunteers serve as an added resource, not a replacement for your work. We are here to guide you, support you and amplify your efforts, but we cannot **replace the essential role of the owner** in the search.

We are a trapping team and our goal is to help you navigate the search for your dog so that we can successfully trap.

LOST DOG ACTION PLAN & CHECKLIST

SECTION 1 — IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS

The first 24–48 hours are the most critical when a dog goes missing. Focused, calm, and consistent action dramatically increases the chance of a safe recovery. Most lost dogs — even in unfamiliar areas — remain within **1 mile** of where they went missing. Use this guide to take immediate, effective steps. Taking proactive steps when your dog is missing is so important to your ultimate recovery efforts. Please check off as you've completed each step.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

☐ **Secure Your Home for Return**

- ONLY if safe to do so, and ONLY if no other pets, children, or vulnerable adults are at risk:
 - Prop open yard gates and even your front door so your dog can return easily.

☐ **Preserve Scent**

- Stop doing laundry and avoid cleaning up yard waste.
- Do not wash bedding or clothing that carries a familiar scent.
- These scent items may be used strategically later.

☐ **Gather Photos**

- Find several clear photos of your dog.
 - Preferably include at least one standing or walking photo for flyers.
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SEARCH YOUR PROPERTY

Indoors

- ☐ Under beds
- ☐ Behind/under furniture
- ☐ Inside closets
- ☐ Inside cabinets (for small dogs)

Outdoors

- ☐ Under the house or in crawl spaces
 - ☐ Inside/behind sheds
 - ☐ Under vehicles
 - ☐ Behind outdoor furniture
 - ☐ In shrubs, plants, or debris
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SET UP A FEEDING & SCENT STATION

☐ Place Food & Water

- Set up near the exit point where your dog left.
- ½ cup dry dog food
- Add aromatic food (e.g., chopped hot dog or wet food, cooked hamburger)
- Provide fresh water
- ***Refresh* food morning and evening**
- Your feeding station should be visible and not something your dog has to seek & find.
- Use an ant moat during ant season. (Place the food bowl inside a larger bowl filled with water to prevent ants)
- Set up additional feeding stations at any sighting locations.

HOW TO SET UP A SCENT & FEEDING STATION

Establish a feeding and scent station close to the spot where your dog made its escape. We suggest placing one food bowl filled with ½ cup of dry dog food alongside something aromatic, like a chopped-up cooked hot dog or a small portion of wet dog food. Don't forget to include a water bowl as well.

Make sure to replenish the food bowl every morning and evening. If ants are a concern, especially during ant season, consider creating an ant moat. To create an ant moat, find a larger bowl that can hold some water, allowing your food bowl to float inside it. This setup will keep ants away from your dog's food.

Next, set up a scent station near the feeding area. We recommend placing several unwashed garments outside (socks, work shirts, workout clothes)—anything that carries your scent—placing it on the ground near the food station. It should not be hidden and should be in plain sight for the dog to see. Having it in an open area also allows the scent to travel. If you have a Ring Camera or any security camera, it's a good idea to position your scent and feeding station within its view. If you don't own a camera, reach out to friends, family, or neighbors to see if someone can lend you theirs. The goal is to get your pet to know that food and water are consistently provided at this location.

☐ Use Cameras

- Position a camera to monitor the station.
- If you have a Ring, Nest, Trail Camera or similar camera, move it to ground level facing the feeding station.
- Ask friends/family to loan cameras if needed.

SEARCHING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

☐ **Walk or Drive Slowly**

- Best times: sunrise or just before sunset. Dogs seeking safety will travel early when wildlife retreats or just before dusk when wildlife comes out.
- Bring a treat jar, bag of chips or anything crinkly to shake and noise-making toys (if your dog has a special squeaky toy).
- Use a high-powered flashlight at night to check bushes and under vehicles from a distance.

☐ **Contact Neighbors with Cameras**

- Note addresses with doorbell or security cameras.
- Visit each home with a flyer.
- Politely ask residents to check footage from the time your dog went missing.

☐ **Go Door to Door**

- Give flyers to neighbors.
- Ask them to check yards, sheds, and under vehicles.

☐ **Locate Cat Feeders**

- Dogs often visit outdoor cat feeding stations.
- Ask caregivers to watch for your dog.

☐ **Special Circumstances**

- If your dog is elderly, injured, or disabled, conduct a quiet, careful grid search.

☐ **Avoid Calling Out Repeatedly**

- Only the bonded owner should call the dog's name.
 - Excessive calling can trigger a flight response.
 - Follow shy-dog protocol whenever possible.
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IF YOUR DOG IS MICROCHIPPED

☐ Contact the Microchip Company

- Report your dog missing.
 - Confirm your contact information is up to date.
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IF YOUR DOG IS LOCATED

☐ Use Shy-Dog Protocol

- Do not chase.
 - Approach calmly and sit angled away.
 - Speak softly.
 - Allow the dog to approach you.
 - Avoid sudden movements.
 - Contact Red Collar Rescue & Recovery immediately for guidance or trap deployment if needed.
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ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to get the message out to your community. There are so many missing dogs that despite your best efforts, your post will continue to get moved down the chain. Even if someone saw your dog, it's unlikely that someone will stop to scroll back through social media to find your post, however long ago it was. We recommend that you use verbiage such as this which encourages people to be more efficient.

Avoid Constant Monitoring

Your goal is to share the flyer widely and have the community **call you directly** with sightings. People should not be documenting sightings in the comments.

Do NOT Post Sightings of Your Dog

It's natural to feel excited when your dog is spotted, but posting the exact location can unintentionally attract crowds. Well-meaning people may rush to help, causing your dog to flee and making your search more difficult.

Too many people searching on foot can push your dog out of the area, creating setbacks in your recovery strategy.

Your Goal

Keep your dog **calm, unpressured, and brave enough to stay in the area**. This requires patience and **minimal foot traffic**.

☐ Post to the following social media platforms

☐ Facebook

- Your personal page
- Local lost dog groups
- Local hiking/walking/biking groups
- Local dog clubs
- Share from Red Collar Rescue & Recovery's Facebook or Instagram pages.

We recommend that you **Copy/Paste the verbiage highlighted below into your posts**. It **saves you time & keeps it simple**. Along with your verbiage in your post should be a jpg of your flyer. We also recommend that you select to **TURN COMMENTING OFF**. By doing this, you gain the freedom to not feel compelled to waste time on social media and focus on your search & rescue efforts. If the public sees your dog, they should be calling the number on the flyer.. Not posting comments in a social media post that will just delay you getting to the location ASAP.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Take a screenshot of this flyer and save it to your camera roll.
- If you see this dog, **DO NOT CHASE, WALK/DRIVE TOWARD, CALL, OR WHISTLE!**
- Call the phone number on the flyer immediately to report the sighting.
- Make note of the direction the dog was traveling when you saw it.

☐ Additional Sites/Apps:

- Straydar — [Straydar](#)
- StraydarAZ — [StraydarAZ](#)
- Lost Dogs of Arizona — [Facebook Lost Dogs AZ](#)
- Tucson Lost and Found Dogs Facebook Group

- Petco Lost Love www.PetcoLostLove.org
- **Neighbors by Ring** - You do **not** need a Ring camera to use this app
- **Nextdoor**

☐ Visit Local Shelters

- Check in person and ask to see quarantine areas.

Visit In Person

If you live in Pima County, be sure to visit the **Pima Animal Care Center** and **Humane Society of Southern Arizona** in person. Don't rely on just calling them - they are VERY busy. It's best if you visit in person as often as possible to continue checking on new dogs that have been brought in. Ask to view the animals in the **quarantine wing** in case there is any possibility your pet could be there. Call them before visiting as they may have limited hours.

Pima County Locations

Pima Animal Care Center

4000 N Silverbell Road

520-724-5900

File a lost pet report: <https://lost.petcolove.org/>

Humane Society of Southern Arizona

625 W Roger Road

520-327-6088

☐ Additional Steps

☐ Contact your **microchip company** to update your information and notify them that your dog is missing.

☐ Notify local **veterinarians and animal hospitals**.

FLYERS & HANDOUTS

Paper flyers are the #1 way to successfully reunite dogs with their families! When you think about it, the more dog missing flyers you distribute, the more eyes will see them, increasing the chances of finding your pet. We suggest putting up at least 100 flyers within a 2-mile radius of where your dog went missing. These flyers don't need to include a lot of detail. If you don't receive any reported sightings within the first 3 days, consider expanding your reach.

☐ **Supplies To Have On Hand:** Heavy-duty clear packing tape, staple gun (for bulletin boards or wooden posts), scissors, extra printed flyers, page protectors, zip ties

☐ **Print & Post Flyers - Please visit our website for examples of what a good flyer looks like.**

- Hang at least **100 flyers** within a 1-mile radius & have an extra 20 on handout to people.
- Use clear packing tape only.
- Flyers should be:
 - Bright, simple, and eye-catching
 - With a clear photo (preferably of your dog standing)
 - Large phone number
 - Breed, weight & any identifying features (keep it simple)
 - We also do not recommend adding a reward
 - DO NOT put the name of your dog on the flyer. Strangers calling your dog's name will only scare your dog even more. The longer your dog is missing, the more they will go into survival mode and the name of your dog called by a stranger will be meaningless.

☐ **Printing Recommendations**

- Use **bright color printing** for visibility (We recommend YELLOW cardstock).
- Print at home or through OfficeMax / FedEx.
- Paper weight: **32–65 lb** for durability.
- Use templates for quick editing and reprinting.

☐ **Protect Your Flyers - Weatherproofing**

- Place flyers in **clear page protectors**.
- Insert **upside down** to prevent rain from entering.
- Seal the bottom with **tape or staples**.

☐ **Recruit Help**

Who to Ask

- Friends
- Family
- Neighbors
- Coworkers
- Church groups
- Hobby clubs

More helpers = more coverage.

☐ **Distribute Handouts**

Give smaller handouts to:

- Neighbors
- Delivery drivers
- Landscapers
- Utility workers
- Joggers/walkers
- Vet offices, groomers, boarding facilities

☐ **Expand Flyers**

- If no sightings after **3 days**, expand another **1 mile**, aiming for **50 flyers per mile**.

WHERE TO POST FLYERS (Legal Reminder- Do **not** place anything **inside** a mailbox - this is a Federal Offense and avoid attaching flyers **directly to mailboxes**.)

High-Traffic Indoor Locations

- Post Office
- Restaurants & Coffee Shops
- Gas Stations
- Delivery Restaurants (ask to attach flyers to bags/boxes)
- Library
- Barber Shops / Beauty Salons
- Nail Salons
- Supermarkets
- Doctor & Dentist Offices
- Veterinary Offices
- Churches
- Community Centers
- Fitness Centers
- Hardware Stores
- Auto Repair Shops

Outdoor / High-Visibility Spots

- Stop sign posts
- Telephone poles
- Community bulletin boards
- Local parks
- Retail centers

A SHY DOG IS A SCARED DOG

☐ Familiarize Yourself With Shy Dog Protocol:

A lost dog is often frightened and should be treated with care. While many people may want to assist in the search, it is not recommended to have large groups of people searching on foot. Instead, it's best to team up with family and friends who are familiar with your dog. If you decide to search with others, make sure they understand the concept and strategies of the **Shy Dog Protocol**.

Why Large Search Groups Don't Work

While many people may want to help, **large groups searching on foot can push a scared dog farther away**. Increased foot traffic, calling out, or approaching the dog can cause them to flee, making recovery more difficult.

Who Should Search

It is most effective to search with:

- Family members
- Close friends
- People your dog already knows and trusts

These individuals are more likely to move calmly, follow instructions, and avoid unintentionally scaring your dog.

Shy Dog Protocol Awareness

If you choose to involve others in the search, make sure they:

- Understand the **Shy Dog Protocol**
- Know **not to call, chase, whistle, or approach (this means even walking towards & following in a car - these can be perceived as pursuing by the dog)**.
- Are prepared to **observe quietly** and report sightings immediately
- Know exactly what to do if they spot your dog

As much as you think your dog will recognize you and your voice, the longer they are gone, the more they revert to a survival mode and you become a stranger. We HIGHLY recommend that you familiarize yourself with this protocol so you are prepared.



NEED HELP?

Have you located your dog but cannot safely secure them, or if you need assistance with trapping contact us at Visit: [Lost Dog Help Request](#) to submit a *Lost Dog Help Request*