

## **A GUIDE TO FINDING YOUR LOST INDOOR CAT**

**Behavior:** One must understand Indoor cats go into a fight or flight mode when outside.

They MAY or may not recognize their name or your face. They WILL recognize, in most cases, sounds or smells: the sound of a food can opening, favorite toy, etc.

Take a moment and think of all the sounds that perk up their ears and make them come running to you. In about 5 minutes of thinking, my wife and I came up with about four right away. If you cannot take the sounds with you, record them on your smart phone and play them back around your house.

Indoor cats lost outside become active in the evening usually around 7pm-5am. The best times for you to call names, make sounds, flashlight shining of eyes and have active searches 11pm – 2am. Get permission from your neighbors to look around their yards. Going onto someone's land may start an argument that could scare your cat away if there. Use the daytime to post flyers make calls and engage others to help search. (More details below)

Your cat will typically hunker down within just a few hundred yards from your home unless spooked.

They can get very small and into places, you may not think of. Take a flashlight, get under bushes, decks, and in sheds behind garbage cans, and so on even during the day. Look, call and bait near storm drains. Storm drains are very small and dark places for a cat to hide. Note: Cats have a floating collarbone that allows them to get their body into any space where their head can get through.

**Trapping:** Get humane traps (Google hunting supply stores) and place them close to the house with favorite foods. (sardines are also a great lure). Place the food outside the trap a few feet away eventually bringing it closer and closer before putting it in the trap.

**Scent Strips and baiting:** Cut up some scent strips out of your old cloths or bed sheets etc. (one inch by three-inch strips) hang them low enough to the ground but high enough for the wind to take the smell. (I wore a shirt for 5 days to make it smell as strong as I could.) The smell can last 3-5 days. Cats can smell over a mile depending on wind conditions. Then make the scent strip and "Cat Chum" (Described below) trails back in the most direct and safe way to your house and/or traps. Do not lay Scent strips and Cat Chum on top of each other. You can and should use both but keep them at least three or more feet apart. Also if possible, leave windows open in your house at night, sometimes your cat is unable to remember what house the smell of the house in the night air draws them to home.

**Cat Chum:** Mix a gallon of water with 1-2 cans of tuna/sardines to make "cat chum". Make straight lines of chum to the trap/house. DO NOT place your scent strips in your chum mix when laying them down. When laying down scent lines concentrate it near the opening of the trap and run it in a straight-line way using less and less as you get further away. Find places to make small pools, discarded bags, cups etc.

**Litter:** Put the UNCLEANED litterbox outside. For Multi-cat homes take the litter, bag it then place the litter out further away from your strips and chum. It is usually more pungent, making the scent carries further to draw in your cat. But be careful on this tip. The litter box can draw in other cats that may push your cat away.

**Making Cat Shelter:** Get/use a small cat carrier that is just big enough for your cat. Place a blanket that smells like you inside. Place the carrier under cover somewhere tight and dark if possible. Leave the door open. Cover it with another blanket that smells like you to protect it from the elements. Place food and water just outside of the open door. Place a favorite toy inside. When approaching the shelter do it slowly and from the front. Calling softly, shine a flashlight inside and look for the eyes.

Do NOT chase them. If you hear or see them REMAIN CALM sit down, softly call their name, make the sound they recognize, open food and LET THEM COME TO YOU. It may take hours for this to happen

even if you are within 10 feet of each other. Fight every urge to get closer or chase. Try to have someone keep everyone else from checking out what you are doing. (See story below)

Post color flyers with accurate colors of your cat, an accurate description of your cat. Do not give your address or amount of reward if any. Do give your phone number but do NOT pay anyone without seeing your cat EVER.

Use a flashlight to shine eyes and sounds to try to lure the cat in between 11pm and 2am. Listen for meows and movement every now and then while tracking the cat. If you hear or see the cat sit down right away and make the sounds call her/his name. At night, use the flashlight to fix their eyes on you.

Our 4<sup>th</sup> night after our cat disappeared, a neighbor called us at 10:30 pm with a sighting. I took my flash light and found eyes looking back at me. I fought my urge to rush in and grab her. I sat down and starting calling. I could not remember any other thing to do for the first few moments other than SIT DOWN and call her name softly. The other things started to come back to mind in short order. I was about to call my wife to bring the food and toys and recordings of the sounds we had. The cat remained fixed on me until the neighbor came down the path and freaked out the cat. (Again, go out in pairs to prevent such mistakes and for personal safety.)

Hire a good dog tracking team, (DO NOT hire any team that will chase the cat.) Do research on the companies). We used Dogs Finding Dogs. (Call them even if you are not in their area they may be able to help find you a team.) They have a Facebook and Website. NOTE: We would not have been looking in the right place if not for this tracking team. Also, note I am putting this up in lots of places to get the word out. So Dogs finding Dogs may not be anywhere close to you.

File missing pet reports with all the animal control agencies in your area.

Post fliers at Vets offices and Call these places daily. Post fliers everywhere within a mile in any direction. Many big housing complexes have community mailboxes post on the left and right side of the mailbox so that people approaching from either side can see the flier. DO NOT give out personal info on the flier, and hide a fact or two about your cat so that you can verify with any caller that they actually have your cat.

Is a house under construction or having work done? Your cat may hitch a ride in one of the trucks. Check the trucks and/or call the contractors. Find out where the truck went. Then look and trap in those areas too.

It can take some time for your cat to feel secure enough to come out of hiding. I am not going to lie and tell you this is a quick process, in some cases months I talked to one who waited a year. Stay strong and positive when tracking. Have your breakdowns and crying moments during the day in your house. NEVER while you are tracking, your intuitive pet can sense that, and will stay away. Stand strong, indoor cats are looking for home keep that in mind. They want to be found and they need you to help them get past their instincts to get home.

From here you will have to decide what to do and it will depend a lot of your cat behavior (how afraid is he/she, how easily scared can he/she become, is he/she familiar with being outside, etc).

This stuff worked for us, it took 18 days and nights but it worked.

May God be with you in all the dark places you must walk for them to bring them home.