

LOST DOGS TIPS & BEHAVIOR

Searchers must have a leash and "bait" such as: hotdogs, string cheese, meatballs & "stinky" cheese like Provolone/Swiss, salmon-flavor kitty treats, luncheon meats, "Little Caesar" dog food & "Sheeba" cat food - both easy tubs, no can opener needed.

*** Bring a squeaky toy, ball or Frisbee if dog likes them.***

Lost dogs are scared, confused and generally respond better to rescue attempts made by women. They might prefer children they know & love rather than the adult owners. Children must be old enough to understand the situation & remain calm. Well-intentioned people, including owners, initially chase these dogs. Chasing just reinforces the dog's perception that people are "predators" and may make some of them run even further.

Dogs are extremely adaptable and will revert to instinctive survival behavior. They constantly search for food, water & shelter. Water is relatively easy to find. Food is a challenge. A dog may hunt for rodents, birds and snakes and will also eat birdseed, manure, grass, insects and carrion. They rummage through garbage bags on trash night. They find food left out in bowls for other animals. Dogs lose weight during their ordeal but can survive for a long time. They are attracted to dumpsters with food, most farms, kennels and multiple-animal homes.

Quiet yards, especially on dead end streets are favorite places to find shelter. They rest on lawns, in fields, cemeteries, open barns & sheds, under shrubs & porch decks. They try to sleep as close to a house as possible, especially at night. It affords them protection from harsh weather and predators. Dogs don't usually go into deep woods unless chased. They can use shallow woods to hide on a temporary basis. Their search for food, water, shelter and familiar scents keeps them primarily in residential areas.

Follow the same routes used previously when walking the dog. Go for a walk with another dog (on leash) from the home, a dog "friend" or same-breed dog. Act "happy" but calm and get the other dog to bark occasionally. A lost dog, if close by, might hear the barking & come out to greet the other dog. Dogs use golf courses, gravel pits, railroad tracks, fields, cemeteries, power line access roads and parks as shortcuts to get to other streets or the next town.

Explain to pet owners that their dog or cat may be agitated for hours when they know a strange dog has settled into their yard or neighbor's yard. Dogs may bark excessively for quite a while. The general public and many lost dog owners are quick to assume that a dog has been a victim of coyotes. Coyotes are a real threat but not an excessive one. Many dogs smell them, sense trouble and go in the opposite direction.

Situations vary, but dogs can survive snowstorms and harsh weather. During the winter you can follow tracks through the snow. Walk beside the tracks, not on them. Bring extra clothes if you plan to be out for any length of time. When "tracking," be discreet. Walk

quietly and talk in soft, reassuring tones except in woods with bear and moose. Be aware of hunting seasons and never trespass. Do not have noisy groups of searchers walking or running around a “sighting” area. Dogs can sense when they are being “hunted” and can easily outmaneuver the best of you. Organize everyone and have a plan – “who to call and what to do” if the dog is spotted. Time is always critical and a quick response is best.

© 2005 Debbie Hall - Used With Permission