

TIPS FROM LOST CATS OF WI

This is a very upsetting time and it's important to try to remain calm. Also remember to be safe yourself. Check our tips below to avoid being scammed.

The Silence Factor: This is a term is used to describe the behavior when a sick, injured, or panicked cat will hide in silence. It is a natural form of protection for a cat to find a place to hide under a house, a deck, a porch, bushes, or any place they can crawl. The Silence Factor kills many cats because while the cat is sick or injured and hiding under a neighbor's deck, cat owners are typically busy "looking" for their cat down at the local shelter or they are busy posting flyers on telephone poles. Many cats will only be found by conducting an aggressive, physical search of the immediate area while understanding that the cat might be close by but hiding in silence.

When an outdoor-access cat disappears, it means that something has happened to the cat to interrupt its behavior of coming home. Cats are territorial and they do not just run away from home (like dogs do). **Thus the tactics and techniques used to search for a missing cat should be different than those used to search for a missing dog.**

Lost cat posters will not always help find your cat if it has crawled under your neighbor's deck and is injured and silent. **We believe that lost cat posters should be used but they should be only a supplement to a primary search** which most often involves an aggressive, physical search of a cat's territory. Yeah, that means looking under and in every conceivable hiding place in your yard and in your neighbors' yards!

When an outdoor-access cat vanishes, the investigative question and mystery to solve is: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CAT? There are basically eight things that could have happened to your cat--we call these "Probability Categories." If your outdoor-access cat has vanished, read about the possibilities vs. probabilities of what happened to your cat

If you've lost a cat that is allowed outdoors part-time or for brief periods of time and he/she has vanished, then it is possible that he/she is not missing but is hiding in fear. That's because even outdoor-access cats can become displaced. Here's how it works. A cat can become "displaced" into unfamiliar territory when he/she is chased off (beaten up by another cat, chased by a dog, etc.) and he/she ends up in a yard or area that is total foreign to him/her. We've had many cases where cats that were "lost" were actually only five houses away or a block away, hiding inside a neighbor's yard in fear because they were disoriented and unable (or unwilling because of fear) to return home. And cats can become locked in a garage, shed or other building in the area.

When an indoor-only cat escapes outside (or when any cat is displaced into an unfamiliar area), the cat is likely hiding (usually near the escape point) in fear. That is because cats are territorial and your cat's territory was inside of your home. Once a cat is transplanted into unfamiliar territory, it seeks shelter because it is afraid. Cats that are afraid (and cats that are injured) will seek areas of concealment such as under a deck, under a house, under a porch, or in heavy brush and they will not meow! Meowing would give up their location to a predator. Their behavior has nothing to do with whether the cat loves you, whether it recognizes your voice, or whether it can smell you--it has everything to do with the fact that a frightened cat will hide in silence!

Sadly, cat owners are told to post flyers and to drive twenty miles to check the animal shelter cages but they are not instructed to set humane traps in their yard or in their neighbor's yard where their indoor-only cat is likely hiding in fear. Animal shelters are not providing this information because they are not trained in this new information.

Here are tips to help you find your cat:

- 1. Use a flashlight** and shine it into dark areas. An animal's eyes will be visible from the light.
- 2. Don't just ask your neighbor to watch out for your cat and search their property. Ask them if they can search with you,** while you check under desks, sheds, etc. Don't expect your neighbor to crawl under their deck to see if your cat is there.
- 3. Immediately put out food, water and your cat's bed** or an article of your clothing at the location where your cat was last seen. There is a good chance your cat will come back to that location.
- 4. Get the word out using the flyers.** We already have all the Information you entered to create the Flyers, just visit this link to create one. There are different templates too: <http://www.helpinglostpets.com/petdetail/Poster.aspx?plD=1327718> Attach a few of the flyers to larger fluorescent colored poster board write LOST CAT in Big PRINT at the bottom. Place at major intersections. Assuming your city bylaws do not prohibit this.
- 5. If you are on Facebook,** go to our Facebook Page and LIKE it. Your listing should be posted there sometime within the next 4-8 hours. Be sure to go there and LIKE and SHARE it. Here's the link: <http://www.facebook.com/lostcatwi>
- 6. If someone contacts you and wants money to return your cat,** Contact the police right away. If someone claims to have your cat, ask them to send you a photo. Ask them to describe your cat to you. If you are going to meet that person, only meet in a public place. Here's information about Safe Meeting Places: www.safetradestations.com
- 7. Contact your animal control, shelter, vet clinics, etc. to report your cat missing.** Ask them if they are using HelpingLostPets.com and let them know your cat is listed there. They may ask you to file a Different Lost Report with them, or go into the shelter. You will need to follow their process. We are working hard to get everyone connected, but until we do, you will still have to do the extra legwork.
- 8. Instruct everyone that is helping you to NOT call or chase your cat.** This will prolong your search. If they see a loose cat, they should sit or lay down [no eye contact] and gently toss out tasty treats to lure your cat in. You should also do the same! DO NOT ASSUME your cat will come running happily to you if they see you. They may not because they may be very scared.
- 9) Consider using a Live Trap.** This method has resulted in the recovery of thousands of "missing" indoor-only cats and displaced outdoor-access cats. It is the same method used to capture feral cats. Here is some information about how to use a trap: www.feralcat.com/trapinst.html Dane County Humane Society (www.giveshelter.org) and Dane County Friends of Ferals (www.daneferals.org) have live traps that you can borrow or if outside of Madison, check with your local shelter.