

Humane Society of Elmore County News – 5 Aug '13  
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Have you ever found a lost pet and wondered what to do? We hear far too often how someone has found a pet and just decided to keep it, immediately 'gives it away,' or assumes it has been dumped or mistreated. Our guidance from dealing with almost 3400 'stray' animals last year is to be very careful jumping to conclusions.

First – if you find a pet you have a legal and moral requirement to try and reunite it with its owner. You never know if there is a grieving child missing their beloved pet or even another pet missing its lifelong buddy. In Alabama shelters are required to hold stray dogs and cats for seven days to allow an owner the opportunity to find their missing pet. Any 'finder' out there needs to work within that law and also perform due diligence in finding that pet's owner. While you are keeping the pet safe you should be looking in the area for signs an owner may have posted, place your own signs/ads in the area, take the pet to a nearby veterinarian or shelter so it can be scanned for a microchip and, check out and post in local newspapers, local radio stations and on-line resources such as Facebook (post to our shelter FB, Lost & Found Pets in Elmore County FB and your own FB) and the various lost & found pet websites. And also call our shelter at 334-567-3377, or email us at [hseco@bellsouth.net](mailto:hseco@bellsouth.net) or we have a lost/found report you can fill in on our website at [www.elmorehumane.org](http://www.elmorehumane.org); you might be surprised how often we are able to link up lost and found pets which just makes our day!

Of course if the pet has a rabies tag or other identification, then getting the pet home will hopefully be a lot easier. Just call the veterinarian noted on the tag and read them the year of the tag and tag number and in most cases that pet can be back with its owner the same day. If there are no tags, check both sides of the collar for phone numbers that may be written on it. If no ID, then take to a vet or a shelter for a microchip scan – in the past year we have reunited one dog stolen five years prior, another dog missing for six months, a stolen Elmore County dog found in another shelter elsewhere in the state, a cat given away a couple of times .... microchips work! And remember, no matter how cute or sweet the pet is to you, NOT calling the pet's vet or identification information could be considered theft so do your part to help reunite a lost pet with its, hopefully, caring owner.

Another caution is jumping to conclusions about the pet's owner or past. A 'coated' dog like a ShihTzu or Cocker Spaniel might be all dirty and matted, but a few days in the woods or running through mud puddles could cause that. And the skinny dog you assumed someone dumped could be one that has been lost for a month or more. Or someone may have just rescued a pet from a bad situation so it doesn't look so well when you find it. Dogs, especially, can also travel quite a long distance in a short time, so don't discount a lost sign many miles away as 'not the same pet.' And sadly pets are picked up and taken far away or purposely stolen, so the pet you found just might have been missing from someone else for quite a long period of time or from a very long way away.

Bottom line on finding a lost pet is to not assume too much and to do everything you can to get it back to its rightful owner. For those of us who love our pets, nothing is worse than never knowing what happened to that missing pet. Granted, there are lousy pet owners as well and some animals that get lost do end up in much better circumstances, but in most cases there is a grieving pet family who would dearly love to have their pet back safe and sound.