

MISSING PETS

On a too frequent basis, we receive telephone calls from distraught members of the public asking us what to do as their pet has gone missing. I would like to offer a few useful suggestions when faced with this dilemma.

Once pet owners have got over that awful initial shock and panic, we suggest that the best thing to do is to comb the local area, repeatedly calling the pet's name. Get help from family members, friends or neighbors. This is based on the fact that pets are often found within a few kilometers of home. It is a good idea to call house to house and ask neighbors to check their sheds or garages, and leave them your phone number so you can be contacted.

Whilst the search is going on, designate one person to remain at home. This is very important as the pet might decide to return home and have a snooze! This designated person should also contact all local Veterinary Hospitals and Humane Societies, and give them full details of the missing pet, including any identity tattoo or microchip number. You might consider contacting the Police, in case there may have been a road accident involving a pet.

If initial actions fail to find the pet, other steps can be taken which include the distribution of brightly colored posters offering a reward. Print the word REWARD in large letters. You should visit the animal shelters or humane societies every two days, and call them every day to check the "found pet register." Advertising in the local newspapers, or in an adjacent area newspaper, with or without a photo, may also prove successful. Some owners have also utilized a "mailing" inserted in the local paper.

As heartbreaking as all this searching can be, try not to give up hope. If you are lucky enough to get that telephone call telling you that your pet may have been found - remember, he or she may look different. They could be dirty, matted and may have suffered weight loss. They may also be in shock or may be injured.

If your pet is found, it is strongly advised that you have your veterinarian carry out a quick examination, as quickly as possible, just to make sure that all is well.

Sometime ago, I wrote an article for this column about micro chipping. This tiny chip is inserted, by a veterinarian, into the nape of the pet's neck. It is painless and permanent, and is a wonderfully simple way of making sure that your pet is identifiable. Each pet hospital, animal shelter and humane society will check every pet that is brought in, in the hope of finding a microchip, and in turn, reuniting pet with owner.

If you have any question about micro chipping, please contact your veterinarian.