ROVERS RETURN DOG RESCUE

FEED – FIX – NETWORK

KEEPING DOGS OUT OF THE SHELTERS.

# LOST DOG RECOVERY: Understanding the WHY

*How you respond when your dog goes missing can make the difference between a safe recovery and a prolonged, more dangerous situation.*



## WHY EDUCATION MATTERS

A lost dog, especially one that is frightened, disoriented or in survival mode, may not behave like the loving, friendly pet you know at home.

- ✓ A dog that normally comes running when called may run away.
- ✓ A dog that loves people may suddenly avoid them.
- ✓ A dog that has never shown fear may become extremely cautious after a frightening experience.

**THAT'S WHY UNDERSTANDING DOG BEHAVIOR IS KEY.**

## KEY THINGS TO KNOW (AND WHY)

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| **DON'T CHASE** | A frightened dog may see you as a threat. Chasing can push the dog farther away, into traffic or into greater danger. |
| **AVOID LARGE SEARCH PARTIES** | Lots of people, noise and activity can create pressure, keeping the dog on the move or hidden. |
| **FOCUS ON SIGHTINGS** | Accurate, timely sightings help us understand where the dog is, when it moves and establish a predictable pattern for a safe recovery. |
| **TRAPS ARE A TOOL, NOT AN AUTOMATIC SOLUTION** | Humane traps can be very effective in the right situation, especially when a dog is returning to a certain area, but they are not the answer for every case. |

## WHAT ABOUT SCENT MARKERS?

A common suggestion is to leave out a bed, blanket, shirt or other familiar item.

- There is no strong scientific evidence that scent markers reliably bring lost dogs home or improve recovery rates.
- Dogs use much more than scent to navigate, including landmarks, familiar routes and their environment.
- In my field experience, scent markers ***are not necessary as a routine recovery method.***



## WHY WE MAY ASK OWNERS NOT TO JOIN THE SEARCH

When your dog is frightened and in flight mode, repeatedly searching can sometimes make recovery more difficult.

- ✓ ***Your dog may run from you*** – even if it knows and loves you, fear can override its normal response.
- ✓ ***You can unintentionally keep the dog moving*** – repeated searching can push the dog away or disrupt a routine it is beginning to establish.
- ✓ ***It can create excitement or conflict*** – the dog may want to come to you but still feel too afraid, which can increase stress and cause it to run.
- ✓ ***It can be dangerous near roads*** – calling or trying to attract the dog's attention can cause it to turn, bolt or cross traffic without assessing the danger.

**YOUR ROLE IS STILL VITAL**

- ✓ Distribute and post clear flyers in the area.
- ✓ Gather and log accurate sightings (time, location and direction).
- ✓ Keep a log of all information and work with an experienced recovery team.
- ✓ When the time is right, you may be the most important person in bringing your dog home.

## COMMON RECOVERY METHODS THAT REQUIRE CAUTION

- **Using other dogs** – may help in some situations, but can also create extra activity and distraction.
- **Using drones** – can help locate dogs, but noise, proximity and poor operation may frighten some dogs.
- **Using tracking dogs** – can be useful in certain cases, but consider whether it could disturb a frightened dog or interfere with a recovery plan.
- **Advertising rewards or extensive media coverage** – can generate valuable sightings, but large rewards or sharing exact locations may encourage people to chase or attempt capture.
- **Copying online recovery techniques** – such as sitting down, avoiding eye contact or using food may help some dogs, but applying them without assessing the dog's behavior and surroundings can create setbacks.

## WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ✓ Contact an experienced lost pet recovery specialist as soon as possible.
- ✓ Gather and log accurate sightings (time, location, direction of travel, behavior and whether anyone tried to approach).
- ✓ Post clear, visible signs in the area.
- ✓ Keep the area calm and avoid unnecessary activity.
- ✓ Follow a recovery plan based on your dog's behavior, history and the specific circumstances.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Recovery is not about doing the most. It is about doing what gives your dog the best chance of returning home safely.

- ***Every dog is different.***
- ***Every situation is different.***
- ***What worked for one dog may not work for another.***

**Rovers Return Dog Rescue**

*Feed. Fix. Network. Keeping dogs out of the shelters.*

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**Education saves lives. PLEASE SHARE.**