

What To Do If You Lose or Find a Pet

By Bethany Prange
THE INDEPENDENT

Deb Dubis Foster, executive director of Helping Strays of Monroe County, gets a lot of questions about the appropriate measures to take if you lose a pet or find a lost animal.

In this article, we'll share Foster's recommendations, and hope you'll educate others throughout our community.

Losing a Pet

First and foremost, Foster encourages all pet owners to take necessary precautions to help their pet if it ever runs away or gets lost.

The best thing you can do for your pets is to have them micro-chipped by the vet.

"Microchipping saves lives," Foster said.

If your animal gets lost, the first thing a veterinary office, Helping Strays, or Monroe County Animal Control will do is scan the animal for a chip.

The chip will provide all your contact information so the animal can be quickly returned to you.

If getting a microchip isn't possible, then Foster suggests getting a collar with tags that include the pet's name, your name, city of residence and cell phone number.

If your pet tends to chew or rip off the tag, Foster said to get a collar that has the info embroidered on it.

When looking for your lost pet, always check Monroe County Animal Control first, and then keep checking every day.

"We suggest to the residents of Monroe County, when you lose a pet, check

with Animal Control," Foster said. "We ask folks to take found animals to Animal Control."

Unlike some other animal control agencies across the nation, Monroe County Animal Control works with Helping Strays to ensure that no adoptable animal is euthanized.

So once an adoptable pet has been at Animal Control for five days, he or she will most likely be transferred to Helping Strays, a no kill shelter. From there, the pet will be prepped for adoption.

It is important that pet owners check repeatedly with Animal Control to see if their pet has turned up. Because once the pet has been transferred to Helping Strays, it may be harder for pet owners to get them back, particularly if they've already been adopted by someone else.

Foster also advises pet owners to post photos of their lost pets on the local Facebook pages such as Monroe County LostandFound Illinois.

Finding a Stray Pet

If you find a dog or cat, the first course of action is to check for collars and tags and have it scanned for a microchip. This can be performed at local veterinary offices, Helping Strays or Animal Control.

"Once you get that info you can call the owner's number," Foster said.

If transporting the animal isn't possible, Foster recommends calling Animal Control. During operating hours, they will pick up stray animals and transport them back to their facility at 619 Poplar Street in Waterloo.

"Residents can also call the local police, because Animal Control isn't always open," Foster said. "The local cops will open it up and put an animal in Animal Control."

Many people are afraid that if they take an animal to Animal Control, they are condemning the animal to death. In Monroe County, that's usually not the case.

"Calling animal control in Monroe County isn't a bad thing," Foster said.

That's because if the animal is adoptable, it will ultimately wind up at Helping Strays where it can be adopted if the owners never come forward.

If you find a stray animal, Foster suggests keeping it in the area in which you found it, i.e., don't pick up an animal in St. Louis and then take it to Monroe County Animal Control. The owners won't think to look for their pet so far away, Foster said.

Foster also reminds residents to exercise caution when approaching any stray animal.

"Don't pick up an animal on the road – you run too much risk of getting you, the animal or someone else hurt," Foster said.

Stopping abruptly or chasing an animal through traffic can cause an accident. Foster suggests reporting the situation to Animal Control or the police instead.

Use common sense when approaching any animal – be on the lookout for signs of aggression or illness.

Monroe County Animal Control is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. Reach them at 939-8681, ext. 238.



Cindy Straub enjoyed a bottle of Schnickelfritz ale while joining the Columbia Sister Cities at their monthly Stammtisch at Bully's Smokehouse in Columbia. More than 40 members gather monthly at a different local restaurant.

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