

5 Things To Do When You Find A Stray Dog

Stay calm and use this checklist to properly deal with a stray pet.

By **Nancy Kerns** - **Published:** August 22, 2011 **Updated:** June 21, 2019



I don't know a single dog owner who hasn't, at some inordinate amount of time trying to capture a stray more than my share in the small town, or its rural surroundings in five years. I've caught burr-covered, obviously lost dogs that suggested they'd tumbled from the back of a truck or were escapees who looked like they were just out for a

If the dog is wearing a collar and tags with current information, you're in luck – and the rest of the information in this post may be 20 dogs I've scooped up in the past five years and current ID tag. It certainly seems like the people who find dogs at all times are also the ones who manage to avoid accidents can happen to any owner. Here's what you

1. Take him to your local shelter

Don't panic; you don't have to leave him there if you are concerned that your local shelter is unsafe, unclean, or provide other things you should do at the shelter (see # 2 and # 3).

If the dog has an owner who is actually trying to find the dog, the owner will most likely come to the shelter to look for the dog. For the most dedicated owners, think to read the ads in the classified section or on craigslist.

2. Ask the shelter staff to scan the dog

The dog may have an implanted microchip ID. If he does, the staff should be able to help you track down contact information for the owner.

This seems like a no-brainer, but it only recently occurred to me that my 14- or 15-year-old cat, who was a stray found 12 long years ago, was never scanned. I actually took her to my local shelter and had her scanned just the other day. I returned someone's beloved lost cat years and years ago. I don't know why it never occurred to me to check before.

3. File a "found dog" report at the shelter

If he does not have a microchip, and you don't want to leave him at the shelter, you should at least file a "found dog" report with the shelter in case you end up deciding to keep the dog (or you give the dog to a friend); it shows that you made a reasonable attempt to find the owner. If an owner shows up some time later and wants his dog back, you'll need to be able to prove that this attempt was made.

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Some shelters take a photo of the dog for their “found dog” reports and file these online; others simply keep a bin a counter at the shelter. Few people are aware that shelters keep these reports; most people just check the shelter uncommon, but reunions have been facilitated through these reports.

4. Take a photo of the dog and make a “found dog” flier

Post it in as many places as you can in the area where you found the dog. Most dog owners look at posters for lost dogs more familiar with our neighbors’ pets than their owners! This way, you are recruiting a small army of people who can help find the dog and his owner.

5. Be cautious if you take the dog home

If you bring the dog home, **take immediate steps to protect your pets.** Check to see if the dog is infested with fleas. Use a sort of potent flea control product immediately, before the fleas can populate your car or home. If your dogs are on flea suppressants, you may want to keep the stray dog as far from your dog as possible for at least a few days, so you can prevent anything transmissible. Wash your hands well after handling the stray, and clean up his waste immediately.

You also need to protect all of your family members from being attacked by the stray, until you’re certain that no dog is great with kids, cats, and your parakeet, it’s easy to forget that other dogs may be highly predatory.

Don’t take anything for granted; be careful at feeding time, and the first time he finds a nice chew bone or toy that he resource-guards. Keep the dog on-leash, or control his access to certain parts of the house with baby gates until he’s like.

Nancy Kerns

Nancy Kerns has edited horse and dog magazines since graduating the [San Francisco State University](#) Journalism program. She edited *Whole Dog Journal* in 1998, Nancy regularly attends cutting-edge dog-training conferences including those for the [Behavior Consultants](#), [Pet Professional Guild](#), [Association of Professional Dog Trainers](#), and Clicker Expo. To stay current, she attends pet industry trade shows such as Global Pet and SuperZoo, educational conferences of the American Holistic Veterinary Pet Food Industry’s Pet Food Forum. As a regular volunteer for her local animal shelter, the Northwest SPCA in Olympia, she fosters puppies and helps train wayward adolescent dogs in order to increase their chances of adoption. Nancy shares her love of dogs with her alumni of the [NWSPCA](#), mixed-breed Otto (whose adorably fuzzy visage was incorporated into WDJ’s masthead since 2015).

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