

# Arizona Found Dog Action Plan

By [Lost Dogs Arizona](#)

Consider the dog you found as lost, with a home and an owner; not a homeless stray. Never assume the dog you found was abandoned or mistreated regardless of its appearance or condition. Legally, dogs are considered property. This plan will help you do your “due diligence” to return this dog to its rightful owner.

## IMMEDIATELY

- Safety first. Make sure you protect your family, any other pets and the dog you found. Keep the dog you found separate from other pets and children. Keep the dog secure so that it does not get loose again.
- Check for ID tags. If the dog is wearing a county tag, call the phone number on the tag to get information about the dog’s owner. If the number is not readable, see our Shelter List at [www.lostdogsarizona.org/shelter-list.html](http://www.lostdogsarizona.org/shelter-list.html) for contact information. If it’s an older tag, you may be told that the tag is no longer in their system. We suggest you request they manually research the tag if that is the case.
- Have the dog scanned for a microchip at any veterinarian office or shelter. This should be a free service but call first to make sure they can do the scan.
- Make sure the scanner being used is a “Universal” scanner, able to detect all chips.
- If a microchip is not found, get a second scan using a different scanner by a different person, perhaps even at a different location. Microchips can migrate and be missed, or the scanner being used may be defective.
- Get the chip number and look it up at [www.petmicrochiplookup.org](http://www.petmicrochiplookup.org). Call the company to report the found dog so the owner can be contacted. Some vets may do this for you. If no owner information is available or it is incorrect, ask for the name of the store, veterinarian, rescue or shelter that purchased the chip. Contact them to see if they have owner records. Lost Dogs of America volunteers are available to help search for owners and can be contacted at [www.microchiphelp.com](http://www.microchiphelp.com). This is a free service.
- While you are at the vet, have them help you check the dog for tattoos. Tattoos are generally found inside the ear or on the inner thigh. Tattoos can be registered with companies who maintain owner information. National Dog Registry is one – [www.NationalDogRegistry.com](http://www.NationalDogRegistry.com). Some breed clubs also keep a database of tattoo registrations.

## TAKE A WALK

- If you can safely do so, walk the dog around the neighborhood on a secure collar and leash. The dog may lead you to its home or you may find the owner walking around looking for their dog. Do not do this if you cannot control the dog.
- Look for lost dog signs in the immediate area. You will do a more thorough search when you are ready to post signs.

## CONSIDER THE COUNTY SHELTER:

Note: The legally required stray hold in Arizona is 72 hours for dogs without identification, 120 hours for dogs with identification. After this time, if the owner does not claim, the dog can be adopted, rescued or euthanized.

- Decide if you are able to hold the dog for days, possibly weeks to find the owner or if you should take the dog to the county shelter. One of the primary reasons why lost dogs are not reunited with their families is that the animal shelter is typically the first place where owners will look but it’s often the last place where people take found dogs due to the fear that the dog will be euthanized. While this is always a risk, many shelters are doing better at minimizing euthanasia. At some shelters, you can make arrangements to adopt the dog if the owner doesn’t claim. You can also continue to work to find the owner and even work with rescues to get the dog out if the dog might be euthanized. Remember that dogs are legally considered property and it is not legal to rehome or keep someone else’s property. As this dog’s finder, either hold and find the owner or transfer to the shelter.
- Get the animal ID number from the shelter. It will typically start with an “A”. If you find the owner, it will help them to have this number when they go to the shelter. You can also use it to monitor the status of the dog in the shelter.

- If you can, please continue to look for the dog's owner following the steps below.
- Let the shelter know if you are interested in adopting the dog after the stray hold is over. Make sure that information goes into the dog's file.
- If you have listed this dog with Helping Lost Pets, change the status of the dog to "surrendered" at [www.HelpingLostPets.com/mypets](http://www.HelpingLostPets.com/mypets).

#### CREATE FLYERS AND POSTERS

- Submit the form to have the dog listed with Helping Lost Pets and Lost Dogs Arizona: [www.HelpingLostPets.com/LDAZ](http://www.HelpingLostPets.com/LDAZ). A ready-to-print flyer is provided automatically. Check your email after submitting the form. Remove Helping Lost Pets from any spam filters. Withhold at least one piece of information that only the owner will know. You will use that to verify ownership.
- Print the 4 per page flyer and make at least 50 copies. You will give these to neighbors and businesses in the area.
- Print the 1 per page flyer and create posters that you will post as signs in the area, on poles, in stores, in your yard, etc. We recommend using the large photo option provided by Helping Lost Pets. Attach it to a piece of neon colored poster board. Use a plastic sleeve to protect the paper from rain. Write 5 words or less in large black letters on the neon board, including a description of the dog you found and your phone number. For more info: <https://missingpetpartnership.org/posters-and-flyers>.
- Post flyers at the county shelters in the area.
- Look for "lost dog" flyers as you are out posting "found" dog flyers. Make sure you recheck the area routinely. Lost dog posters may not go up right away or there may be extenuating circumstances (owner is disabled, on vacation, etc.). It doesn't mean the dog is homeless or unloved.

#### NOTIFY AND POST

You want to get the word out to as many people as possible and you need to consider that not everyone has internet access and not everyone uses social media. When posting online, use the post on Lost Dogs Arizona or Helping Lost Pets because it contains all the necessary information.

- Submit a found dog report to your local shelter. Start with our list of shelters but ask about other organizations you may need to report to: [www.lostdogsarizona.org/shelter-list.html](http://www.lostdogsarizona.org/shelter-list.html)
- For Maricopa County, file a Found Dog Report by calling the Call Center at 602-506-7387 or the Lost/Found Desk at 602-372-4598. You can also email [lostfound@mail.maricopa.gov](mailto:lostfound@mail.maricopa.gov) or file a report at the West shelter at 2500 S. 27<sup>th</sup> Ave in Phoenix.
- For Pima County, file a found pet report by calling 520-724-7222. You can also report a found pet at the Humane Society of Southern Arizona.
- Notify local Police Departments and city government. Owners may have contacted them looking for their lost dog.
- Contact breed specific rescues. Worried owners may be in contact with them to look for their lost dog. See our rescue list at [www.lostdogsarizona.org/rescue-list.html](http://www.lostdogsarizona.org/rescue-list.html)
- Alert your Homeowners Association and other neighborhood organizations. Post to the Facebook pages for these organizations. Post to [NextDoor.com](http://NextDoor.com). Check back often for lost dog posts.
- If you haven't yet posted to Helping Lost Pets/Lost Dogs Arizona, do that now at [www.HelpingLostPets.com/LDAZ](http://www.HelpingLostPets.com/LDAZ). Make sure you routinely check your post, login at least once every 30 days and make sure emails are not being sent to your spam folder. Check the Helping Lost Pets map and the Lost Dogs Arizona photo albums for matching lost dogs.
- Post the dog on [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org) in both the Community/Pets and Community/Lost & Found sections, for your area and for nearby areas. Monitor craigslist for lost dog. If you use the craigslist email, make sure you check your email often, including your spam folder.
- Post the dog as a found dog on [petharbor.com](http://petharbor.com) if any of the local shelters use petharbor. Enter your zip code. Select the shelters the owner may be visiting. Then, select "Found a Pet", select "Dog" and "Register your Found Pet".

- In Maricopa County, post your dog as found on the county interactive map. If you filed a found dog report with Maricopa County Animal Care and Control, this should be done for you but check to be sure the information and location is correct. Check for lost dogs on the map as well. [gis.maricopa.gov/ACC/Stray/index.html](http://gis.maricopa.gov/ACC/Stray/index.html)
- There are many Facebook pages dedicated to lost and found pets. Post to as many as you can. We recommend sharing the post from Lost Dogs Arizona so that when it's removed because the dog has been reunited, the shares will also be removed. Post to Straydar, Lost Dogs of Arizona, Lost and Found Pets of Pima County, Lost Pets of Northern Arizona, Animal Lovers of Laveen, Animal Lovers of Chandler, Animal Lovers of Peoria, as appropriate, as a minimum.
- Post to local Facebook pages: Sell/Swap pages, HOA pages, your own personal page.
- Post and check ads in local newspapers. Many newspapers will post a free ad for found dogs.

#### REUNITING THE DOG WITH FAMILY

- When someone calls in response to an ad and/or flyer, ask the caller's name and telephone number and tell him/her that you will call right back. This will give you their information in case you need it later.
- Do not offer a description of the dog, let the person inquiring describe the dog including unique identifying characteristics (e.g. scars, tattoos, behaviors, color patterns, collar/harness, etc.). Also have them tell you when and where the dog went missing.
- Ask for proof of ownership via email or text. Examples include vet records (call their vet to confirm), rabies certificate or license, adoption papers, registration papers, transfer of ownership or bill of sale, photos that are dated and with family members.
- If you are meeting to return the dog, be sure to let a friend or family member know where you are meeting or ask someone to come along. Plan to meet at your local police parking lot, your vet office or their vet office. Make sure it's a public place in daylight. If you meet at a police station, go into the police station first to inform them of what is happening, so they can keep an eye out.
- Observe the meeting of the dog and person. Does the dog show familiarity with the person? Be aware that a dog who has been missing a long time or who has been in [survival mode](#) may not immediately show familiarity or affection so do not be alarmed if this happens. It may take time for a long-lost dog to recognize their owners or feel comfortable with them.
- If the dog didn't have a collar or tags when you found it, please encourage the owner to bring them when you meet. You may also want to educate them on microchips, if needed.
- Update the status of the dog on the Helping Lost Pets website/Lost Dogs Arizona by changing to "Reunited" at <http://www.helpinglostpets.com/mypets>.
- Remove all flyers and posters. Take down web postings and discontinue any ads. Let all organizations you contacted know the dog has been reunited and thank them for their assistance.
- Congratulate yourself for reuniting a family!