

Paws Up for Pets

Found a lost pup? How to help while also keeping yourself safe

Nearly every day in some area of Palm Beach County, a dog darts out of the house, roams away and becomes lost. Or an unwanted dog is taken for a ride and then ushered out of the vehicle in a strange place miles away. Imagine the panic they feel.

If you came across a roaming dog who is clearly lost, what would you do? Your response depends on many factors. Ask yourself:

- Do you know how to safely handle a dog you do not know to avoid being bit?
- Do you keep a spare leash in your car as well as pet treats and a water bowl to entice the dog to come to you?
- Can you secure the dog in your vehicle so that you can safely drive to your home or to the nearest veterinary clinic or animal shelter to scan the dog for any signs of microchip identification?

• Do you have a room in your home or a secure fenced area in your yard to keep this dog safe while you try to find its owner?

• Do you have other pets in your home who may be agitated seeing this newcomer?

• Do you even know how to report a lost dog?

All good questions. If you decide to help, please make sure that your safety is a top priority.

Some dogs roaming the streets may be escape artists. Others may have been abandoned. All depend on good Samaritans to provide a temporary safe place until they can be reunited with their families or placed in new homes via animal shelters or rescue groups.

Over the years, I have found and reunited countless dogs. Then came Emma. In April 2020, at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, my



neighbors phoned me about a very sick-appearing little gray dog sitting in their front yard.

“Arden, come quick! We are trying to feed her, but she seems to be very sick,” my neighbor Monique relayed. “We saw on our security camera a car that pulled up in front of our house and pushed this dog out of the car and left.”

When I arrived, this poodle-Chihuahua mix had no collar, no identification tags. Fortunately, it was during the day, so I took her to my local veterinary clinic to have the staff scan her for a microchip that could show her name, her owners and more details.

No microchip, but my veterinarian did say, “Arden, this dog is very sick. She is infested with heartworms.”

We agreed to care for this dog as she recovered from

heartworms. Within two days, we had given her a name: Emma. It took several months and many treatments for her to recover.

Like some of you, we didn’t plan for this dog, but we are so glad Emma is part of our family. She just celebrated her sixth birthday and is super sweet, smart and super healthy.

So let me offer you some tips and resources to help you help lost dogs.

If the dog sports ID tags on the collar, do not approach the dog face to face to read the tag info. Instead, just slide the tags to the back of the dog’s head so you can read in a safe manner. Local licenses or rabies tags can be used to find dogs’ owners.

Microchips, each about the size of a grain of rice, are often implanted between a dog’s shoulder blades. Animal



LEFT: Arden Moore in this recent photo snuggles with Emma, who is now healthy and happy. **ABOVE:** Emma in 2020 shortly after Arden’s neighbors found her. She was suffering from heartworms and needed treatment. **Photos by Arden Moore/The Coastal Star**

shelters, rescue groups and veterinary clinics are equipped with wand devices that can scan and reach out to the dog’s owner. Unfortunately, it is estimated that more than 30% of dogs do not have microchips, or their people fail to update the chip information when they move.

Let’s not overlook one of the most basic but vital game plans — posting “Found Dog” posters on telephone poles in your neighborhood as well as in businesses or on community bulletin boards.

These posters should include a clear photo of the dog, where you found the dog and your phone number. It is believed that most lost dogs are found within a mile radius of home. And you can create missing-dog flyers using apps for iPhones and Android.

With the dog safely secured at your home, rely on social media or file a report with the county (see box nearby). Popular sites posting lost and

More resources

- To report a lost or found animal to Palm Beach County Animal Control: palmbeachcounty.com/palm-beach-county-animal-control
- To post a notice about an animal: secure.co.palm-beach.fl.us/snap/found-dogs
- Tri-County Animal Rescue: tricityanimalrescue.com/find-a-stray3F
- Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League: peggyadams.org/services/lost-found
- Petfinder.com
- Missingpets.co
- Lostmydoggie.com
- Pawboost.com

found dogs are Next Door and local Facebook pages. Be sure to include a clear photo of the dog, the location, and ask for help from those reading the post.

Also reach out to shelters near where you found the dog, such as Tri-County Animal Rescue in Boca Raton and Peggy Adams Rescue League in West Palm Beach. Call ahead to see if you can bring the dog to these places, as they may not have space to take in lost dogs. But the information you provide may help in reaching people who have contacted the shelters while searching for their missing dogs.

Lost dogs — and their families — will be forever grateful to people who step in and help reunite them.

Arden Moore is an author, speaker and master certified pet first aid instructor. Learn more by visiting www.ardenmoore.com.



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