

What to do if you lose or find a pet in Nevada County?

The number of stray animals across the country is increasing, causing shelters to be overwhelmed. The Humane Society of the United States estimates there are about seventy million strays nationwide, and of those an estimated five to seven million end up in shelters. Here in Nevada County, our shelters and rescues are full of stray pets, some abandoned by their owners and others waiting to be reunited with them. Nevada County Animal Control and Grass Valley Animal Control pick up a large number of stray animals, and community members also bring them to the city and county shelters. Here are steps you should take if you lose or find a pet.

1. Be Safe with the Animal. Pets that are loose in public are often terrified and unpredictable. If you find a stray animal and are uncomfortable with approaching it, please call animal control. If you find an animal you are uncomfortable handling within the unincorporated area of the county, contact Nevada County Animal Control at (530) 265-7880. If you find this animal within the city limits of Grass Valley or Nevada City, call Grass Valley Animal Control at (530) 477-4630.

2. Check for Identification. If the animal has any form of identification such as a collar with tags, attempt to contact the owner. Often a rabies tag will list the veterinary clinic issuing it, and the clinic can be contacted to identify the owner. The pet may also have a microchip, so contact the appropriate animal shelter or a veterinary clinic that has a microchip scanner. Please note that the Sammie's Friends shelter is currently having a low-cost Microchip Madness promotion. Bring your pet to the shelter on Wednesdays from 10am-noon for a \$15 microchip implant and registration.

3. Notify the Appropriate Animal Shelter. For both lost and found animals, notify the county or city shelter, or both, as appropriate. Sammie's county shelter phone number is (530) 471-5041. Because the shelters are full, they may ask if you can keep a found animal and not bring it into the shelter. Sammie's Friends maintains a log of both lost and found animals, and they will attempt to match them. Please note that you are legally required to notify the shelters if you find an animal, as it is someone's property.

4. Use Social Media and Online Platforms. Posting pictures and information about lost and found animals on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and community groups can reach a large audience quickly. In Nevada County you can post lost and found animals on dedicated Facebook pages named “Lost and Found Animals of Nevada County“ and “Nevada County Lost Pets.” There are also websites and apps specifically for reuniting lost pets with their owners, such as Petfinder and Finding Rover.

5. Create Lost and Found Pet Flyers. Making flyers with a photo of the animal and your contact information can be effective, especially in the area where the animal was lost or found. Post flyers in public places such as grocery stores, parks, and community bulletin boards.

6. Beware of Scammers. When you post that you have lost a pet, watch out for unscrupulous people who may call or message you saying they have your pet. They may also pose as shelter employees or animal control officers to attempt to extort money from you. While it’s hard to comprehend that there are people out there who would take advantage of someone’s grief at losing a pet, this is very common. When my dog escaped last month, we posted on Facebook and received multiple texts and calls from people claiming they had her. Note: she returned safely on her own after a few hours on the run.

7. Temporary Care. While searching for the owner, provide temporary care for the animal, including food, water, and shelter. If possible, keep the animal separate from any pets you may already have to prevent potential conflicts.

8. Reuniting Pets and their Owners. If you lose an animal and find that it is at Sammie’s Friends, you will be asked to produce evidence of ownership to reclaim, for example a photo of you with your pet. Similarly, if you find an animal and provide it temporary care, make sure that someone who claims to be the owner provides you the same evidence of ownership.

9. Spay and Neuter your Pet. Pets who are spayed and neutered are much less likely to be strays. Unfortunately, the vast majority of pets Sammie’s Friends takes in are unaltered, and lately many of the female dogs and cats we have taken in are pregnant. Please spay or neuter your pet to reduce the number of strays.

