Have you found a cat and not sure what to do?

It is the nature of most cats to roam around their local area. When you come across a cat that you don't recognise, it is not easy to determine whether the cat has a home locally or not.

The cat could be:

- *A local cat with a sense of adventure having a wander*

- *An owned cat that has become misplaced for various reasons*

- *A stray cat that has been abandoned*

- *A feral cat who has never lived in a domestic situation*

So, what should you do if you have found a cat? Please follow our checklist below.

Feral cat, stray cat or owned cat with a sense of adventure? Please find out before you act.

Do not offer food initially, just water otherwise it may just encourage the cat to stay when it has a loving home elsewhere. Unless the cat is injured and needs medical care, do not leave the cat at a local vet practice which may cause the cat more stress and could put the practice in a difficult situation if they cannot board the cat.

Be aware that elderly cats can often look like stray cats as their body condition deteriorates. They could be on medication and may appear sick but could just be elderly or have got lost and the owner has not been able to give them the care they require.

Is the cat sick or injured or in danger? If you're concerned, please call the RSPCA on 0300 123 999. Vets can also seek authorisation from the RSPCA to offer some emergency treatment.

Is the cat pregnant? If you suspect it is, please call us for advice and help but remember it may still belong to someone and we should do all we can to return her to her rightful owner who may be worried about her.

If the cat is friendly, please put a paper collar on the cat with your contact details, asking owner to contact you:

https://www.cats.org.uk/media/1283/com_1032_lost_and_found_collar_print_out_aw.pdf

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Has the cat got a collar or tag? Use the details to contact the owner. If they are uncontactable, please treat the cat as a stray and follow the advice below:

1. Ask your neighbours if they recognise the cat - there might be someone in the local area frantically searching for their lost pet. Put up posters in the local area remembering that cats, particularly unneutered males, can travel miles through linked gardens in search of a mate and can become lost or disorientated. You should place the posters on the surrounding roads as well as your own. If you aren't able to do this yourself, please ensure you get support with this via neighbours, a charity or Surrey Missing Pet Support CIC using the information in the step below.

2. If there are no visible signs of ownership, the cat can be scanned for a microchip which links to a database with the owner details. Most veterinary practices will scan a cat for you. This should be free of charge. Alternatively, there are organisations that will come out and do this for you. In Surrey you can contact Vicky Platt on 075420 778190 by phone, text or WhatsApp or email Surrey Missing Pet Support CIC smpscic@outlook.com.

   Here for Cats may also be able to help as we may have a scanner in the area. It will be a legal requirement for cats to be microchipped by June 2024 but this does not mean that all owners will abide.

3. Only feed and provide shelter once you have established that the cat is not leaving the vicinity. If you cannot take them into your house, on a temporary basis, create a safe and warm space in a shed or garage or provide a straw filled waterproof shelter. Here for Cats or other organisations may be able to provide a temporary shelter and/ or a heated bed to keep them warm and out of the wetter weather, particularly whilst you establish whether the cat has an owner or caregiver locally.

4. Check local newspapers, street posters and local vets in case the cat has been listed as missing and ask local vets to register the cat as found.

5. Post a photo and brief description on your Facebook page and any local community Facebook groups. You can also sign up to the Nextdoor app to chat with your neighbours.

6. Tweet a description and photo of the cat on Twitter and ask your followers to retweet - you as it will reach a larger number of people this way.

7. Contact Cats Protection's National Information Line for details of your nearest branch's lost and found register and use their website which has more information and guides on what you can do to help:

   https://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/lost-found-and-feral-cats/found-a-cat

8. Only contact charities once you have exhausted all of the above to ensure the cat does not have a loving home as so many cats end up in rehoming centres and many do have owners but it is very difficult to reunite them once they have been taken from the area they came from.

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