

What to do immediately after you find the animal:

Walk the neighborhood: Take a walk around the immediate area and speak to any neighbors, postal service workers, landscapers, or anyone who may have seen this pet before. Most pets are found close to home.

Next Steps:

1. Check the animal for tags or phone numbers on the collar: If the animal has identification tags or a phone number on the collar, give the owner a call. Let them know that you have their animal and arrange a safe public place to meet and get their animal back to them. If there are rabies or city license tags, call the phone number and let them know you have found an animal with their tag. They may be able to look up the owners' information to get the animal back home.
2. Have the animal scanned for a microchip: You can take the animal to any veterinarian or animal shelter to have the animal checked for a microchip. This is the fastest and easiest way to get an animal reunited with its owner.
3. Post the animal on Petco Love Lost: Take a photo of the animal, specifically a photo of the animal looking at the camera. Post the animal on Petco Love Lost. This free service is powered by facial recognition technology and helps match found animals to reported lost animals nationwide. This will also give you a shareable link that can be posted on social media sites and the option to print flyers if you choose.
4. Post on the Bitter Root Animal Lost & Found Facebook group: This group has over 20,000 concerned citizens and is one of the go-to locations for lost pet owners or their friends as well as the animal shelters in Great Falls. Oftentimes, animals posted on this site are returned to their owners within hours. You can post the link you created on the Petco Love Lost site.

5. Be cautious! There are several things to be aware of when finding a lost animal.

- First and foremost is your safety. Make sure not to put yourself at risk trying to secure the animal. They may be scared and are more apt to bite when threatened. Do not force the animal to come to you or try to trap them with your body.
- When contacted by someone claiming to be the owner, feel free to ask for a photo or other proof that they own the animal. Most pet owners will have at least one photo of their animal on their phone.
- Remember that you don't know the medical history of this animal. Meaning that you may not want to introduce the animal to your pets or children in case it has a communicable disease that you are not aware of.
- Do not alter the animal. Since the animal is not yours, you may not get it vaccinated, have it groomed, or do anything else that may cause harm or be against the wishes of its owner.