

LOST CAT BEHAVIOUR

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Understanding Survival Mode In Lost Cats

Understanding survival mode in lost cats is important factor when searching for your cat. Being aware of this lost cats instinct can help or hinder your efforts, not to mention your morale.

When cats are lost, scared or injured, they may go into survival mode. What does this entail?

Your Cat Will Not Meow

In survival mode, lost cats will not meow, because this would alert predators of her presence. Lost cats will not make a peep, though you might be three feet away calling their name and tapping a dish of stinky tuna.

Your Cat Will Not Respond To Your Voice

When in survival mode, lost cats will not respond to your voice. This single fact is hard for most people to believe. In many cases, we have such strong bonds with our cat, it's unfathomable that they would ignore our voice calling to them. She sleeps snuggled up on my neck... he always comes running when I tap his food dish... he never leaves my side... But cats are not people, they're cats. They have cat instincts that kick into gear when they need them, and survival mode is a cat's instinct working to keep it alive.

Your Cat Will Find A Hiding Place And Wait

When in survival mode, lost cats will find a good hiding spot and wait. They will hunker down until they either feel safe enough to move, or gets thirsty or hungry. This might take days.

Unfortunately, lost cats' survival mode instinct can get her into trouble. They may fearfully crouch in their hiding spot for so many days that they starve to death, or are too weak and disoriented from dehydration to make it home once they feel safe again. This is why it's critical to thoroughly search your home and your surroundings as a first response if your cat is missing.

By understanding how survival mode in lost cats work, you can greatly increase your chances of recovering your cat if they're close by, which usually, they are.

Lost Outdoor-Access Cats:

One of the most profound discoveries that have been made is that the methods that should be used to search for a missing outdoor-access cat are much different than those used to search for a missing indoor-only cat!

When an outdoor-access cat disappears, it means that something has happened to the cat to interrupt its behavior of coming home. Cats are territorial and they do not just run away from home (like dogs do). Thus the tactics and techniques used to search for a missing cat should be different than those used to search for a missing dog. Lost cat posters will not always help find your cat if it has crawled under your neighbor's deck and is injured and silent. We believe that lost cat posters should be used, but that additional measures should be taken as well. If your outdoor cat is missing, consider that it may be: **TRAPPED** – Your cat could be up a tree, on a roof, under a house, inside a neighbor's basement or shed. This would mean that your cat would likely be within its normal territory, usually a 5-house radius of your home. It is imperative that you obtain permission from your neighbor to enter their yard so that you can look for your cat yourself. **DO NOT** rely on asking your neighbor to “LOOK” for your cat—their idea of looking will be to call if they see your cat sitting on their patio! **INJURED** – The behavior of an injured or sick (or displaced, panicked) cat is that they will hide in silence. We have called this “The Silence Factor” and this behavior **KILLS CATS EVERY DAY!** Hiding in silence is a protective mechanism that cats use to protect themselves from predators. What this means is that before you print up lost cat posters or drive down to your shelter to look for your lost cat, **SEARCH** under and in every conceivable hiding place on your own property and on your neighbor's property! It is quite possible that your cat is injured and in need of medical attention and you will need to use a flashlight and crawl under your house in order to save his life!

DISPLACED – Cats that are chased from their territory either by dogs, people, or other cats who beat them up and cats that are panicked by fireworks will often become “displaced” into unfamiliar territory. Many of these cats, once their adrenaline levels have subsided, will work their way back home, often showing up the next day or a few days later. But many of these cats, especially those with skittish temperaments, will be so panicked by the experience that they will hide in fear and will be too afraid to return home. We've seen many cases where a cat was “lost” but was actually just three houses away, crouching and hiding in fear inside a neighbor's yard! These cats could have jumped a few fences or crossed one street and yet they behaved like they were feral cats, afraid of humans. Some meowed and let their owners pick them up—others darted and ran from their owners and had to be humanely trapped. Understand the critical importance of conducting an aggressive, physical search for your cat within your cat's immediate territory (neighbor's yards) in order to determine if your cat is still within the area. The failure to conduct this type of search is why so many cats are never found by their owners and end up being absorbed into the feral cat population

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Lost "Indoor-Only" Cats":

If your indoor-only cat has escaped outside there is good news--your cat is probably not lost at all! That is because it is likely that your cat is hiding and, depending upon the terrain, may be closer than you think! When an indoor-only cat escapes outside, it is a case of where is the cat is likely hiding (usually near the escape point) in fear. That is because cats are territorial and your cat's territory was inside of your home. Once a cat is transplanted into unfamiliar territory, it seeks shelter because it is afraid. A cat that is afraid (and cats that are injured) will seek areas of concealment such as under a deck, under a house, under a porch, in heavy brush and they will not meow! Meowing would give up their location to a predator. It has nothing to do with whether the cat loves you, whether it recognizes your voice, or whether it can smell you--it has everything to do with the fact that a frightened cat will hide and be silent!

put litter box outside with box for shelter and something that smells like home ,make sure you put food, water .. can rub cat food in trees to get smell out there { you may get a few other cats come by } and scatter some dirty litter around corners of property . walk at night when it is real quiet about 2-3 am shaking treats calling softly , your cat may not come out right away but follow you home . and be on the porch in the morning . repeat every night . indoor cats are usually within 3 houses from yours. if you see your cat do not get excited be calm bend down low talking calmly throw few treats in front of you wait till cat gets real close to grab you may want to have gloves on in case they scratch you . some cats coming running some do not .

The method that Missing Pet Partnership has pioneered that has resulted in the recovery of many "missing" indoor-only cats is the same method used to capture feral cats--the use of a humane trap. We call this "trap-and-reunite" or "TAR". These wire cages are available for rental from your local shelter or veterinarian or for sale at hardware stores, pet stores, or on-line at www.animal-care.com. Humane traps have a trip mechanism that when triggered by a cat, will shut the door and contain a cat inside.

Sadly, cat owners are being told to post flyers and to drive twenty miles to check the animal shelter cages but they are not being instructed to set humane traps in their neighbor's yard where their indoor-only cat might be hiding in fear. They are being told to place an advertisement in the local paper but they are not being told that injured cats will likely be hiding within their territory in an area of concealment and that they will not meow

PART #2 Missing Cat BEHAVOIR

Why would a cat run away?

outdoor- cats go missing soon after you move , they feel that the new house is not their home Cats are territorial by nature and if they don't perceive the new home as their territory, they may try to get back to the old house. Even if they don't succeed in returning to the old home, they are motivated to look for it. Introducing a cat to a new neighborhood is best done over a few weeks; keep your cat indoors for at least two weeks, longer the better , then gradually let the cat out under with you supervised till they get use to their surroundings, always before mealtime to ensure that your cat will return to you when called.

Indoor cats, escaping accidentally door left open /windows The motivation to get out is often territorial or simply opportunistic. Seeing another cat or a squirrel /birds outside the window, curiosity or defend its territory. Once the indoor-only cat has entered the Great Outdoors, it may panic at finding itself in unfamiliar territory and go into a complete defensive mode by hiding from everything and anything including their owner. The fact that their pet does not come when called makes people think the cat has "run away" but actually the cat is simply too frightened to show themselves or to return home. The majority of indoor cats are very close to home hiding. You really need to search every part of your yard under decks and bushes, They tend to make themselves as small as they can, not to get seen

A much smaller percentage of missing cats are sick or injured. We all would think a sick or injured cat would want to stay close to home. But if a cat is in a lot of pain, it may be attempting to remove itself from anything that it associates with pain. Or it may be in such pain, it fears for its life and goes into a complete cover defensive mode as a survival mechanism.

Most cats do not "run away" even if abused —most cases a cat was lured by a squirrel, or chased off by a other cat or dog or someone else had frighten it away , even Kids picking it up walking down the street . Once a cat is scared away they usually won't leave the new area unless frightened away again.

What is the "homing instinct"?

People believe cats will always find their way home. Homing instinct refers to the ability of an animal to perceive direction that is beyond the usual human five senses. There are two types of homing instinct: one type refers to the ability of an animal, after being moved, stolen, or lost outside their established territory, to return to their home . Another type refers to the ability of an animal to follow their owner, when their owner has moved away and left the animal behind, Older cats performed better than younger. Homing ability dropped off with distances greater than

7.5 miles from home. One theory to explain this ability is that cats have sensitivity to the earth's magnetic field (perhaps because as they age more metal is deposited in their brain).

Is That My Cat? After the adventure, how to recognize your pet and changes to expect...

Effects on Appearance

It's hard enough trying to identify your pet when it is dusk or dawn and the animal you've spotted is quickly scooting under the bushes. After an animal has been away from home for some time, its appearance can change and make spotting a pet even harder.

The more of a TIMID cat personality, the more it will stay hidden, the less food it will eat, the less it will groom, the less it will sleep, and the more drastically changed its appearance will be.

A timid cat missing one to two weeks often appears noticeably thinner but is in generally good shape.

A timid cat missing three to four weeks (or longer) will have likely lost a substantial amount of weight. Its fur may have changed — thinner, patchy, dirty, or somewhat different in color. It is certainly possible to not be able to recognize your own pet if it has been gone a long time.

AFTER ONE MONTH baby fuzz around ears and face could be gone, face thinner, grey cats look almost black the color of a missing cat coat change.. sometimes been bleached out by the sun. Cold weather conditions cats fur much thicker than usual, frost bit ears are a possibility when outside all the time. Some cats if they have the skills could get bigger if their hunting skills are good, depends where lost and the conditions

YOU WILL NEED VET CHECK WHEN CATS GETS HOME

Effects on Behavior

How will my cat behave after an adventure outside? cat behavior and instantly reverted back to pet cat behavior, SOMETIMES LITTLE Skittish ABOUT LEAVING THE HOUSE & SOME NOT. Most cats are much more mellow and affectionate after returning home. Depending on the length of time cat is missing it may take longer for the cat to recuperate and rest after his journey before he has the energy to get back in his regular routine cleaning himself and may sleep more at first rather than playing, If you have more than one cat at home when your lost cat returns you may have to resort to new cat introduction. Slow & easy

Will my kitty remember how to use the litter box? Yes, they will

How will kitty's eating habits change? After vet check if your vet has no special diet & has no other food recommendation, feed your cat the same thing as before, either free food all day or many small meals per day, Some cats will over eat when they first get home and get upset stomach watch for that

Is there a chance that my cat will run away again? Unfortunately, YES! Once outside and have the taste of fresh air and grass being an indoor cat yes , best to supervise your cat or take out regularly on leash in the back yard to get some sun and play time SOME CATS do not want to go back out again and some will try to get out again & again, depends on your cat, not all cats are the same.