



Kelsy's Keys to Loss Prevention for Dogs Going to New Homes or Temporary Homes

Kelsy is a search dog for Three Retrievers Lost Pet Rescue, and she loves to find missing dogs. Kelsy and I have been asked to help find many dogs that escaped from animal rescue groups, from foster homes, from boarding facilities, and from people who have recently adopted a dog. While rescued and adopted dogs are on their way to a better life, many of these dogs are likely to try to escape from the very people who are trying to help them. These dogs are often being transported to new, unfamiliar surroundings, and they can break loose in spite of precautions taken by people with the best intentions. To prepare for the worst, Three

Retrievers Lost Pet Rescue would like to see all rescue volunteers, fosters, and adopters take these simple, inexpensive precautions before the escape happens.

1. Take a picture!
2. Make a scent article.
3. Have 3retrievers.com bookmarked.
4. Martingale collars and harnesses.
5. Don't chase.

Take a Picture. Any time a dog comes under your care, whether you are transporting, sheltering, or adopting, take a picture. Many people have camera phones, and you can buy inexpensive digital cameras if your phone doesn't do pictures. You don't have to do anything with the picture, necessarily, but it would be helpful to have a central repository of pictures of dogs that come through your doors. Even if the picture is just stored on the phone or camera, it will be there, available for retrieval if the dog goes missing. One tip: get close to your subject. After you take the picture, review it on your camera or phone, and ask yourself, "Could someone easily identify my dog if this picture were posted on a Lost Dog flier?"

Store a Scent Article. Most dogs in the rescue system are housed with other dogs or cats. Many dogs are adopted into homes with multiple pets. Kelsy and other trailing dogs can find missing dogs, but it is much easier if they have an uncontaminated scent article to work from. Ideally, Kelsy likes to work with a pillow or blanket that only the missing dog has slept on. Often, people can't find a single article in the whole house that hasn't also been touched by the other dogs or cats. The solution is simple: create and store scent articles for every dog in your house. To make the scent article, you start with a sterile gauze pad. You should have rubber gloves on when you do this, to avoid adding your own scent to the article. Rub the sterile gauze pad all over your dog—along the mouth and ears, between the toes, all over the body, and in the area of the hind quarters. If your gauze pad ends up covered with fur, that's even

better. Place the pad in a Ziplock-type storage bag. Mark the outside of the bag, using a Sharpie, with the dog's name and the date the sample was taken. Store it in your freezer. A scent article stored in this manner should be useful for up to six months. You should get in the habit of doing this for all your dogs just prior to the 4th of July and New Year's Eve because these happen to be two particular times when a large number of dogs go missing, due to fireworks.

Bookmark Three Retrievers. Three Retrievers Lost Pet Rescue should be stored in your browser's favorites folder. You should have our phone number, 206-552-0304, programmed into your phone. We can help you better, and have a higher rate of successful recoveries, if you call us sooner rather than later. Many people call us days after the escape, because they either didn't know about us or because they thought the dog would come back on his own. The scent trail is easier to follow when it is fresh, and the dog will have travelled a shorter distance, and found fewer opportunities to get into trouble. Our web site has a ton of information about finding lost animals. Many of the techniques and tips are counter-intuitive, so check out our web site before taking the usual steps that most people do when a dog goes missing. Many of the common techniques can actually do more harm than good.

<http://3retrievers.com/index.html>

Martingale Collars and Harnesses. Countless times, rescue dogs have backed out of regular collars. A Martingale style collar cinches up when the dog tries to back out, preventing the escape. Almost all pet supply stores and web sites carry these collars, and they aren't much more expensive than regular nylon collars. For small dogs, you may want to use a harness rather than a collar. Be certain the harness or collar fits. I have had dogs back out of harnesses. Inside the house, put the harness on, and then pull toward yourself while the dog resists, if possible. You should not be able to pull the harness off. Greyhounds require a collar designed specifically for their streamlined shape. Ideally, it would be nice to have some sort of ID tag on the collar, even if you don't know where the dog is going to end up. Even if you have to write a phone number on a piece of paper and then secure it to the collar with several wraps of clear mailing tape, it can be a lifesaver in an emergency.

Don't Chase an Escaped Dog! The first thing everyone does when a dog escapes is to chase it. Sometimes you get lucky, but usually this just makes matters worse. It's the instinctive thing to do, and everyone does it, but you should force yourself to resist this urge. Almost any dog, no matter how small or feeble, can outrun the fleetest human. Your intention is to protect the dog, but think about it from the dog's perspective: if you were a small animal that didn't understand the language everyone was speaking, and you were in a strange place, and a stranger came running toward you, what would you do? You would run like hell! There are many techniques for luring a loose dog, including offering food, lying flat on your back, using a happy, friendly dog as a lure, and trapping a loose dog in a fenced yard. Chasing the dog almost never works, unless you just happen to get lucky. Also, calling the dog's name usually isn't helpful. For one thing, the dog may not even know his name yet. Don't chase, and don't call the dog's name. Call us instead.

Jim Branson & Kelsy, from Three Retrievers Lost Pet Rescue.