



Cats are very home-bound and stay within a well-demarcated territory, hence the extremely vocal cat encounters that usually happen on the perimeters of these boundaries – especially in spring and summer when the seasonally poly-oestrus, intact queens come on heat...

But once cats go out of their territory, they easily become lost. This happens especially when people move to a new neighborhood.... and it's also the reason why it is not advisable to take your cat with on holiday (as opposed to a dog). In this case the cat will have lost its sense of direction and in the absence of familiar smells and associations with their previous home, it will easily get lost when it wanders off. A few hundred meters away from the new home or holiday apartment, the cat will most likely become disorientated and frantically start to wander in any direction. It has suddenly become a stray cat and it's on its way to becoming an alley cat....!

Cats that were reared in a sheltered environment like on a small dwelling behind high walls in town during their imprinting period (about the first 2-3 months of age) are never required to navigate as, for example, feral and farm cats are. The home-bound cat does not "hunt" over large distances and its territory is much smaller compared to the feral cat and they become more easily lost.

Return Of The Pink Panther?

There are, however, some amazing stories on cats that disappeared into thin air...only to return after several months or even years. It is said that cats easily adopt a new home and live with its inhabitants for a while only to return to the original household... presumably when it becomes bored! There is a story about people who had lost their cat several months before. They met up with new people and when they visited their new acquaintances for the first time, they were amazed to find their old pet Tom cat curled up on the couch.... the only difference was that the new "owners" had taken it to the vet to be castrated! Needless to say the original owners were too embarrassed to claim back their cat and decided not to interfere with old Tom's choice! So, if your cat has been lost for several months or even years: do not despair because chances are that he/she has found a new home. If this is not the case then your cat is likely to be able to look after itself very well.

Help! Missing Cat!

- Distribute notices – preferably with a picture of your cat – to veterinary practices in the area.
- Also place adverts in the local newspaper, on lampposts in the neighborhood.

- Notify the local SPCA or Animal Anti-cruelty League. It is worthwhile to pay these institutions regular visits while you're looking for your cat.
- Do not forget to spread the word at the local primary and high schools. Children have a way of "adopting" stray pets and when they come to realise that the "lost" kitty belongs to someone else, they will return it...

.....especially if there is a reward attached to returning the cat to its rightful owner!

We recommend that your cat wear a collar with your telephone number clearly written on it or even better, be micro-chipped. It may guide the finder to returning your cat sooner. Finally, don't despair: Your cat may eventually return home like the prodigal son – a wiser and more street wise animal!