

## Hiring a Pet Detective & Search Dogs

This chapter is about utilizing Pet Detectives and Search Dogs in the search for your lost pet. All of the different terms and options can be confusing. Here are some insights and information about Pet Detectives and Search Dogs. Definitions related to Pet Detectives and their work follows.

Just like you turn to an expert with any serious problem, consider working with a professional to find your missing pet. Consider all options when you are searching for a lost pet, and use all resources possible. One resource that might be available to you is a Pet Detective to search in-person or provide help via phone. Pet Search and Rescue offers one hour phone consultations given by two highly renowned Pet Detectives. Call us at 800-925-2410 for more information. We can also provide other services, such as Fur and DNA Analysis, contacting the media, finding Pet Detectives near you, and more.

Most Pet Detectives offer specialized services, including trained Search Dogs. Others offer support, consultations and help “pounding the pavement.” No matter if the Pet Detective offers Search Dogs or not, the end goal is the same – finding your lost pet.

Search Dogs do what dogs do naturally – they use their nose to find their quarry. People try to categorize and label what the Search Dogs do. But, in reality, we don’t even know what they smell! But, training Search Dogs to find a specific target (pet or people!) is a life-long commitment requiring hours of devotion and patience working with the dogs. It also involves many challenges that present catastrophic problems. Overcoming these challenges require commitment, proficiency and support of expert Search Dog trainers.

However, searching for a pet is a team effort. Search Dogs are not a magic wand. Don’t hire a Pet Detective if the only outcome you would be happy with is the Pet Detective bringing your missing dog back in their arms. That rarely happens. Search Dogs are one tool in an effective search for a lost pet. Most pets are found with a combination of techniques, such as the methods listed in this guide. That being said, some pets are found with the Search Dogs that would never be located with other methods. When looking for a Pet Detective also consider if you want a professional with trained or certified dogs, or if you are okay working with someone in-training or even a hobbyist. All options have benefits and drawbacks, but availability might be the major factor when selecting services to help search for your lost pet.

There is a growing movement to offer Pet Detective services for free or a donation in conjunction with rescue groups or shelters. However, that is a distant dream at this time and will take support from communities and passionate people who understand the importance of recovering lost pets and returning them to their loving owners. Search online and ask at the local shelter if there are any such resources in your area; however chances are that you will have to hire a Pet Detective for the special

services. After you find your pet, consider volunteering with Missing Pet Partnership at [www.lostapet.org](http://www.lostapet.org).

Price is a major factor to consider when looking at hiring a Pet Detective. Pet Detective services are not for everyone, and it can be cost-prohibitive. For lost pet cases many times a Pet Detective will have to travel to your area. Prices range from an hourly rate of around \$100, all the way up to thousands of dollars. Price usually depends on the following factors: location of the lost pet case, travel distance, terrain, the time a Pet Detective works on your case, case details, and level of service. The primary factor typically is travel time or distance. However, each Pet Detective sets their fees, so you will need to obtain a specific quote for your case.

Some people are surprised to find out that Pet Detectives charge for their services and are not volunteer-based like traditional Search and Rescue for missing people. In addition, some are shocked at the prices and think they can buy a Bloodhound for the rates that some Pet Detectives charge. One person commented, "My husband believes that if a service costs more to do than the animal costs to buy, then it isn't worth it. In my position I can only spend \$25 to \$50. I think that all pet owners (not just the wealthy ones) should be able to afford any pet service."

There are a few reasons why Pet Detectives charge for their services. First, the training required to really offer professional services like this is extensive. It can take 6 months to 2 years to train a Search Dog to find missing pets. It isn't as simple as buying a certain breed of dog and going to work. Even Bloodhounds require training to know what they are supposed to look for. Plus additional training for the Pet Detective is the respected standard. Travel costs to attend training also contribute to expenses as most people have to travel long distances to get to training locations. Second, Pet Detectives and Search Dogs cannot work every single day. It is often strenuous work and the Search Dogs have to take days off and fit in more training. Third, in today's business world the cost of overhead is astronomical. Even phone and internet bills are expensive. Add onto that the cost of maintaining healthy dogs (some Pet Detectives have multiple dogs in various levels of training) and the high cost of living quickly makes it necessary to charge high prices to be able to offer the services.

In addition, not all pet services are for everyone. We sincerely wish that veterinarians and other pet services did not have to charge for their services. However, that isn't a reality. And, Pet Detectives generally have to charge for their services too. Most Pet Detectives do offer free information and donate search times for some cases, such as searches for military veterans.

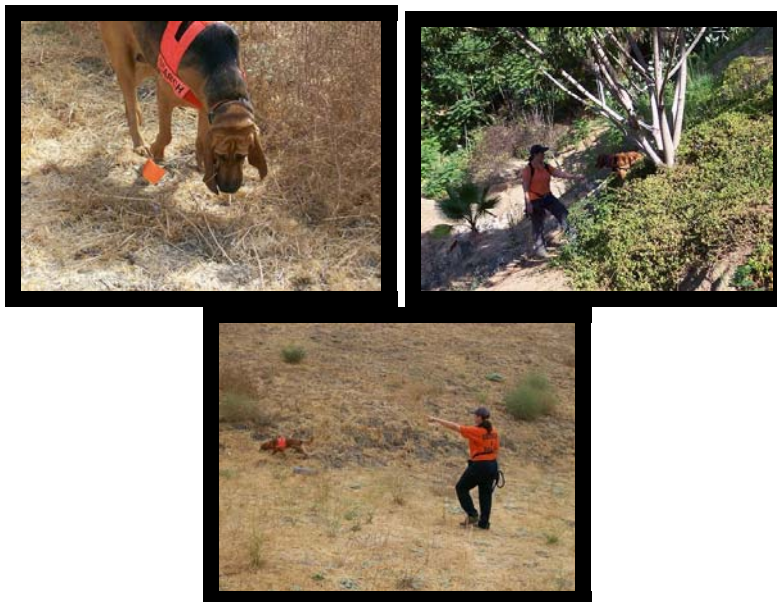
Another client incorrectly thought that Pet Detectives with Search Dogs are a simple service. "All I was thinking was that someone would come by, ask me some questions, get a scent from the floor somehow, and that'd be it. I had no idea how challenging and involved it is."

Compare this to when the police, FBI and Search and Rescue are called out on a missing person case. The Search Dogs have to train for months, if not years, to be “mission ready.” It costs tens of thousands of dollars to search for a missing person and the search can go on for years. They have specialists who deal with profiles, Search Dogs, crime scene analysis, investigating, etc. Pet Detectives have to attend and pay for training and provide all of these services themselves. Of course, the family of a missing person never has to deal with the cost of the search for their loved one. Tax-payers generally cover the search cost. How many people would not hire the police if they had to pay a \$100,000 + bill to search for a relative?

And, just like a missing person case, Pet Detectives do not find every missing pet. If it was easy to train the dogs and search for missing people, then traditional Search and Rescue would find all of the people they went looking for. It really is like looking for a needle in a million haystacks, where the needle could be moving all of the time. The vast majority of lost dogs are not just sitting under a bush for us to find. Both searching for people and pets is difficult and dangerous. Searches can be in a wide range of locations, including swamps, dangerous intersections, and hillsides and have poison ivy, cactus plants, aggressive dogs, angry neighbors and other challenges.

However, despite all of these points, many times the lost pets are located by the Search Dogs. And, even if the pet is not located with the dogs immediately, the information the Search Dogs find can be critical. For example, if a pet is picked-up and put into a car immediately versus if a dog is hiding in a canyon can be important in helping determine what to do next in your search and what area to focus on.

Personally, I would hire a Pet Detective with Search Dogs if one of my pets went missing, but I would also be prepared for any outcome including not finding my pet.





**Pictures of trained Search Dogs working lost pet cases.**

**[www.PetSearchAndRescue.com](http://www.PetSearchAndRescue.com)** One common mistake pet owners make is following cookie-cutter instructions for finding missing pets- even using this guide! The internet, well-meaning friends and shelter workers want to help and do provide some excellent suggestions. However, using a professional Pet Detective is a helpful method in making sure that you are conducting the right search for your pet – based on your location, your pet’s personality, how your pet escaped, your pet’s health, breed, size and past history.







**Pictures of dogs found thanks to Pet Search and Rescue and Lost Pet Detection.**

Finding a Pet Detective can be challenging because of a few reasons. First of all, there are only a few people in the entire U.S. offering Lost Pet Services. Second, many Pet Detectives don't advertise, or at least don't advertise in common locations such as the telephone book. Finally, some Pet Detectives may be in training or have dogs that are not ready for certification. They may not be promoting their services until they have completed their training. But, they are excellent resources and options as they can still try to find your lost pet. So, tracking down a Pet Detective can be hard. To find a Pet Detective most people simply search online. However, your local animal shelter or veterinary clinic might know of someone offering these services. Pet Search and Rescue can help you find a Pet Detective, and offer consultation services to any location with telephone access.

If you are considering hiring a Pet Detective, it is a good idea to ask some questions about their training and experience. Many people want to know about a success rate and how many pets we have found. However, there are so many things that happen to lost pets that are out of anyone's control that any sort of statistic can be misleading.

**Ask for some information before hiring a Pet Detective, such as:**

- Training References. Ask for names and contact information for at least one or two people that the Pet Detective has trained with. It is impossible to train a Search K9 alone. Contact the reference and ask questions about their training.
- Client Reference. Any Pet Detective should be able to provide you with at least a few names with email or phone numbers of past clients. Every single case is different,

so don't expect that your case will be identical to the other client's. But, it will help you see how the Pet Detective operates.

- If they have Search Dogs, ask if they are trained to find remains.
- If the Pet Detective offers you a guarantee that they will find your pet, that is a red flag. It is impossible to find every single pet.
- Most Pet Detectives are not licensed Private Investigators. If you have a stolen pet, ask the Pet Detective for a referral.
- Ask how long the Pet Detective will search. Most services are for a specific amount of time, not unlimited.

### Definitions:

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Area Search Dog                    | A dog trained to locate any fresh pet scent in the directed search area. Usually, no scent article is provided to the dog at the start of the search session.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Bastard Search                     | A comprehensive and detailed search of the office and the surrounding property to make sure the pet is not stuck or hiding. This term is from Search and Rescue, because small children are found hiding or sleeping in small spaces at home, such as under beds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Cat Detection Dog                  | This type of Search Dog is trained to search for any cat that is in the search area. Just like Drug Detection dogs alert on all drugs, or Bomb Detection dogs will alert on any bomb, Cat Detection dogs will alert on any cat. Using a Search Dog trained in Cat Detection can be challenging in areas with high cat activity, because the dog will try to find any and all cats in the vicinity. This category of Search Dog was introduced by Kat Albrecht of Missing Pet Partnership and Pet Hunters International. |
| Certification                      | A test to determine the dog team's ability. Both the handler and dog must work together as a team to determine proficiency.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Direction of Travel                | The general route that the lost pet took. This term is used in Search and Rescue when working Search Dogs to find a missing person.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Find / Walk-up Find                | When a dog locates the quarry it has been searching for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Ghost Trail                        | When a dog follows a non-existent trail.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Handler                            | The person handling or training the dog.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Hot Track                          | A term used when the trail is fresh and the dog is trailing well.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Human Animal Bond (HAB)            | The bond or connection a pet owner has with their pet.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Missing Animal Response K9         | A Search Dog trained under the guidance of Kat Albrecht and Missing Pet Partnership or Pet Hunters International.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Missing Animal Response Technician | A Pet Detective trained by Pet Hunters International.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Negative Indication                | Body language the dog displays when the scent weakens or ends.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Pet Detective                      | A person who looks for lost pets using a variety of techniques. Common techniques include: Search Dogs, surveillance, witness development, checking shelters, phone consultations, humane trapping, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Pet Theft Myth                     | There are limited statistics on how many pets really are stolen or taken for use in research. Animal activists claim an extreme number of animals are stolen, while businesses in animal research claim no pets are stolen. The reality is probably somewhere in between. But, the myth is perpetuated and causes pet owners undue concern.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Probability of Detection           | The chance that the missing animal could be detected by searchers if it is, in fact, within the search area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Reading Your Dog                   | Ability to recognize signs given by the dog indicating relative information.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Runaway                            | The foundation of training a Trailing Search Dog used for motivation. It is also the primary method for teaching the Search Dog to use their keen sense of smell to locate their quarry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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| Scent                                                          | The smell of the quarry the dog is trailing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Scent Article /<br>Scent Item                                  | Any item that has been worn, handled or come into contact with a subject used to give the dog the scent of the pet and started on the search.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Scent Cone                                                     | A pattern created by scent emanating from a pet which will spread over a larger area as air currents carry the scent, creating a cone-shaped pattern.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Scent Dog                                                      | This term frequently is used interchangeably with the term Search Dog. It means that the dog is trained to work with scent to locate its quarry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Scent Pool                                                     | Areas where the scent has concentrated in large amounts due to a target spending time in an area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Scent Specific<br>Search Dog /<br>Specific Scent<br>Search Dog | A versatile type of Search Dog, used to search for all types of lost pets. They can both search an area for a pet such as a hamster, or they can be used to follow the scent trail of a mobile animal, such as a horse. In either scenario, the Search Dog is presented with the specific scent of the lost pet they are locating.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Search Area /<br>Target Area                                   | The identified areas to focus search efforts and resources after Search Dogs have determined a Direction of Travel.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Search Dog                                                     | The general category of dogs trained specifically to locate quarry. They can be trained in a variety of ways, depending on the focus of their work. Examples of Search Dogs include: Trailing, Tracking, Area Search, Bomb Detection, Drug Detection, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Target Animal /<br>Target Pet /<br>Subject                     | Pet the dog is search for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Tracking Dog                                                   | The dog follows the scent trail footstep to footstep, primarily on crushed vegetation. The methods used to train a Tracking Dog are very different than the techniques used to train a Trailing Dog.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Trailing Dog                                                   | A Trailing Dog is a dog trained to follow the scent trail of a lost pet from one location (where the pet was lost from) along where the pet traveled to where the pet currently is to be found. The Trailing Dog uses a combination of scent as well as crushed vegetation odor left by its quarry. This type of dog is used frequently by Search and Rescue to locate missing people. It is proven that dogs are very capable of trailing over hard surface areas, such as cement, and discriminating between different scents. |

In the end, no matter if you have someone help you search for your pet or not, no one will take the place of a loving owner in a search. It takes hard work to get a pet back, time and money. If there is one thing you should remember in your search: Don't give up!