

## ***I Found a Stray Dog. What do I do?***

***by Michelle Santoro, ACO, ACI***

**Bernards Township Animal Control Officer**

**If you find a Stray Dog**, by law, you are required to turn the dog over to the local authority (animal control officers / police officers) where the owners will be able to claim their pet. One of the primary reasons why lost dogs are not reunited with their families is that the animal shelter is **the first location** where dog owners search for their lost dogs but it is typically the **last location** where found dogs are taken.

**If you find a Stray Dog**, consider the safety of the dog and of yourself. A frightened and possibly sick or injured dog may behave unpredictably. A sudden move may spook him, causing him to bolt into traffic or even attack you. Even a small dog can inflict a painful wound, and if a dog whose vaccination status is unknown bites you, you will be advised to undergo expensive and painful preventative treatment for rabies.

**If you find a Stray Dog**, check with your local animal control officer for reports of lost pets. Chances are there is an owner who desperately wants his or her companion home.

**If you find a Stray Dog**, the Animal Control Officer will have the dog scanned for a microchip. Microchips are tiny computer chips containing identification information that are injected under the skin of pets to provide permanent, positive identification.

**If you find a Stray Dog**, assume, no matter how the dog behaves or what it looks like, that this dog is owned and loved by someone who wants the dog back. This is the basis for the **THINK LOST, NOT STRAY** campaign. Dogs with skittish or "xenophobic" temperaments may run from strangers, especially when lost, are often mistaken as having been "abused." In reality, many of these dogs are pampered pets who have exhibited fearful behavior since puppyhood. They are genetically predisposed to being skittish and their behavior has nothing to do with how they have been treated. Also, a dog's appearance can be deceptive when determining how the dog was treated before you found it. A loose, lost dog will lose weight, become dehydrated, obtain injuries, become matted, and pick up ticks, fleas, and burs in their fur. So for the sake of a potential happy reunion, never assume that the dog you found was dumped, abandoned, or homeless.

**If you find a Stray Dog call Bernards Township Animal Control at (908) 204-3066 or Police Dispatch at (908) 766-1122. If a pet owner cannot be located we bring all animals, until they are claimed, to our contracted facility Roxdane Kennels, 75 Stirling Road, Warren, N.J. 07059 (908) 755-0227.**



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