

Increasing Return to Owner Rates

Goodwill and positive press are generated when an animal control agency takes a proactive approach to reuniting lost dogs with their families.

CACC currently has two windows of opportunity to help people find their lost dog:

1. When a person who has lost a pet comes in they can be offered helpful advice and can post on the bulletin board or place reports in binders.
2. When “owned strays” are impounded, staff and volunteers can try to determine who they belong to.

Lost Dogs Illinois believes that by implementing the ideas suggested below, CACC can increase their Return to Owner Rates, reduce euthanasia and also work towards the goal of Chicago being a No Kill community by 2015.

- Implement a Marketing Campaign to bring awareness to the public that CACC and AWL and other facilities are where their lost pet has been taken. Market it w/Animal Welfare League (Ads and flyers) (translate into other languages) (Simply by having volunteers post flyers in neighbor stores, etc.) Or place ads on Craigs list, newspapers, etc.
- Develop a Volunteer Pet Detective or Lost Pet Recovery Team. Some of their tasks can include:
- Use a dedicated email address for lost and found pets. Develop a lost pet report form on the website to enter information about lost and found pets. Use this to match against pets that are being held at CACC, AWL & other facilities or are posted on LDI, Craigslist or other internet sites.
- Tracing dead end microchip and ID tags (Lost Dogs Illinois has volunteers who trace dead end tags – will train other shelter employees/volunteers)
- Door Greeter to help people with lost pets, post flyers on the board and give out lost pet information.
- Develop two new Facebook pages for lost pets: one for cats and one for dogs.
- Volunteers can help individual lost dog families w/lost dog recovery tips
- Any adopted dog or claimed dog – leaves w/ID tag on a new collar. (Apply for an ASPCA Grant to receive an ID engraving machine) Research shows putting the tag on the collar when the dog leaves a facility increases the likelihood of a reunion. Research shows that more than 80% of Good Samaritans who find dogs want to find their owners.
- Use AVMA Best Practices for Scanning for Microchips.

- Field redemptions (scanners and computers) if the dog does not have to come into the shelter; less stress on the dog, staff, volunteers, and other dogs in the facility. Reduces euthanasia. More room for truly homeless dogs.
- Negotiating or redesigning fees so they are not punitive.
- Install a big flat screen TV in lobby for people to view the “found animals” that are being held. Many people have phobias about entering the wards.
- Expand the hours of tours for stray wards.
- Expand website to include different languages or install translator. Provide tips on how to find lost pets on the website.
- Free or low cost microchip clinics along w/ID tagging