

# How to Find a Lost Sheltie

(Note: This is written by someone who has A LOT of experience looking for and finding lost shelties.)

BUT the suggestions that follow are actually a lot of different people's thoughts.

**Most important is to "get the word out"** on foot to every household in the area. Not everyone gets a newspaper, nor do they read the LOST ads. If there are signs out, attention is drawn to the fact that there is a lost sheltie. On any posters/notices/ads place the information that the dog is microchipped or tattooed (hopefully they are). I had one returned almost immediately after I added that. The dog we believe had been "removed" from its yard unwillingly and when it was known that the dog could be positively identified even at a later date, it was returned. Could help.

**Do large posters 14X21 in very bold print**, that could be seen by a passing vehicle, with a telephone number of someone immediately available to check out a sighting. Make it brief, no long explanations on why the dog got loose, etc. No small size signs. You want someone driving by to be able to see the phone number easily, so that if they spot the dog they could call from a cell phone. Put "PLEASE DO NOT CHASE!" on your signs, as a chased sheltie will run like the wind! Try writing big red letters on poster "BELOVED Child's PET." Maybe you'll tug at someone's heartstrings if they think the dog belongs to a child. We all have this feeling of sadness and helplessness. People almost always will try to help a lost "sheltie"...say "sheltie" on your advertising mode, but also in smaller print say "miniature collie"...because some people are NOT smart enough to know what a sheltie is. We care not about semantics at this point in time, call it a miniature collie!

**POSTER EXAMPLE ATTACHED.....** we use two 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper, one on the top and one on the bottom with a picture of the dog in the middle. We cover the whole poster with clear "Contact" shelf paper. This makes the poster waterproof and it'll last for weeks.

**Always put a phone number on the poster or flyer where someone is available all the time.**

**When someone calls with a sighting, you must go NOW, not hours later...**Dogs, especially shelties, do not meander around the same place usually, they seem to be "going" somewhere. Either back to their hideout or a new hideout.

**Keep a list of everyone who calls with a sighting and a phone number** so that if you get to that place of the sighting and can't figure out what they said, you can call them back and maybe they can meet you there and tell you which way she was headed, etc. **Get a map of the area (Mapquest) and mark the sightings on the map...**

**If this dog was a timid dog to begin with...he will be hiding, petrified.** When hunger finally overtakes fear, he will venture out of his hiding place. That is when the mass notification of the whole area will pay off. Hopefully, somebody will see him and call a phone number from a sign or one of those business cards. At that point somebody needs to GO, right then... because the dog is going to have fear overtake hunger and go back to hiding somewhere.

**Most times a humane trap is a very good idea. If you find the area she is in get a humane trap to that location.** You will put food and her toys and something with your scent on it, inside the trap. Do NOT try to chase her.... our experience is she will not wait to see who it is...she will just run. The passive way to recover is with the trap. If you have a decent Animal Control they may loan you one if you have a sighting. Some of us have purchased our own traps. Place clothing, toys, and food in the trap and give it time. Check the trap frequently to release any captured critters that you didn't want to capture, like cats, raccoons, etc.

**If you get sightings don't chase him**, you'll just chase him out of the area. Try to keep him comfortably in the area he is spotted in. Find a place to feed him, so that he feels he can comfortably come back to that spot for food...and then try to beg, borrow or steal a humane trap. Because he is a sheltie he isn't going to go to a stranger to start with, and with his mind set now EVERYBODY is a stranger. The only way you are going to get him is if he happened to run into somebody's yard and gets cornered, or he goes into a trap.

**Lost shelties are in "flight" mode.** If you think they will come to you when you call them, that has not been my experience. They see a human or a dog and they are gone. They don't wait to see who it is. Don't take a dog with you looking. That has not worked for me ever. The dog is now scared to death... he is in flight mode. IF he did see you he would not hang around to see who it was, he would take off running to find a place to hide.

When he finds a hideout, it may take several days for him to get comfortable enough to come out... THAT's why you get the large signs out and flyers or business cards to a lesser extent. I think the big signs get to way more people than you can cover with flyers. When he gets hungry and starts to venture out to look for food...people will call... then you do putting the food out and setting the trap.

**Be diligent in your search... Don't think he will come home on his own.** Sometimes they do, but you cannot take a chance. Make sure everyone knows this dog is being searched for and continually be seen "searching" so if anyone does have the dog, they know you are not going to give up and go away!

**When you are on foot searching you need to think like a dog.** What does she like? Which direction would she be most likely to head? Is there another house/yard in the neighborhood similar to yours? She might be there. If she's crossed a street, she might have a visual barrier preventing her (in her mind) from returning. Follow the lay of the land - which way would you be most likely to go if you were she? Take the path of least resistance. If you come to an area where there is a drainage ditch, or railroad tracks, or high power lines... that is like a highway! Walk it and "quietly" look for the dog. Do not take a chance on scaring her out of the area.

**If you are thinking someone "has" the dog, because there have been no sightings...**Two things. As you are driving around looking...Tape one of those large posters to the back of your vehicle, so everywhere you go, "people" know "somebody" is still looking for this dog, as is not going "to just go away!"

**Also, if you suspect the dog may have been stolen,** state that the dog is microchipped. If its a bitch, state that she is spayed. Some put "NEEDS MEDICATION" in large print on their flyers and posters. And if at all possible, offer as large a reward as you can afford.

**Talk to the local delivery people, mail men, oil companies, electric companies and ask them to keep an eye out for the dog, give them one of those business cards with the dogs picture on it. Seek out every child in the neighborhood (kids always know where the dogs are on the street) and give them a flyer or business card with your number.** Post one at the school and play grounds. If someone in this category helps you find the dog, it is nice to give a reward, no matter how small.

Words of advice from a dog officer - make sure you keep calling dog officers (I believe you **MUST physically check the Animal Control facility** and Humane Society yourself. Do not leave the decision as to whether a dog in the 'jail' is a Border Collie, Aussie, or a Sheltie up to an inexperienced \$1.95 shelter worker, (JMHO) and vets to check - yes you'll drive them crazy, but better safe than sorry.

**Most importantly - lost dogs do not usually range.** They usually stick to one particular area, might be 3 miles in diameter. Now, she might have traveled a couple miles before she got to that area, or she might be around the corner, but odds are if she's loose (and not stolen) that she's either with someone, or she's staked out an area.

For every day that passes that you don't have any calls with sightings, put new signs out approximately 1 mile in each direction.

**Make sure to look for her at her regular meal times.** This seems to bring frightened/lost dogs out of hiding, being the creatures of habit that they are. Rule of thumb, though - expand by one mile in each direction for every day she's been missing, and call all ACOs, shelters and vets in those areas. Mail flyers to all local vets (within 30 minutes driving distance)

**Create "drop zones" where you can leave food & an article of your clothing** so that if she runs across it, she will stay with your scent. We successfully found one of my own dogs that I had recently placed when she escaped her new owners & couldn't be caught. We had reports of her in an area, left a shirt there, & there she stayed until caught (she was terrified & wouldn't go near her new owners). If possible (& she's used to it) leave her crate outside, too.

Since I spend a good part of my day looking for lost dogs, I can tell you, they are really easy to miss. They can be five feet away and you'll miss them, but they are creatures of habit, and even when lost, they stick to a routine.

**BUT DO NOT GIVE UP!** It is perseverance that gets the dog!

Good Luck!

Darla Duffey and Ashley the searcher dog!

If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went!

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