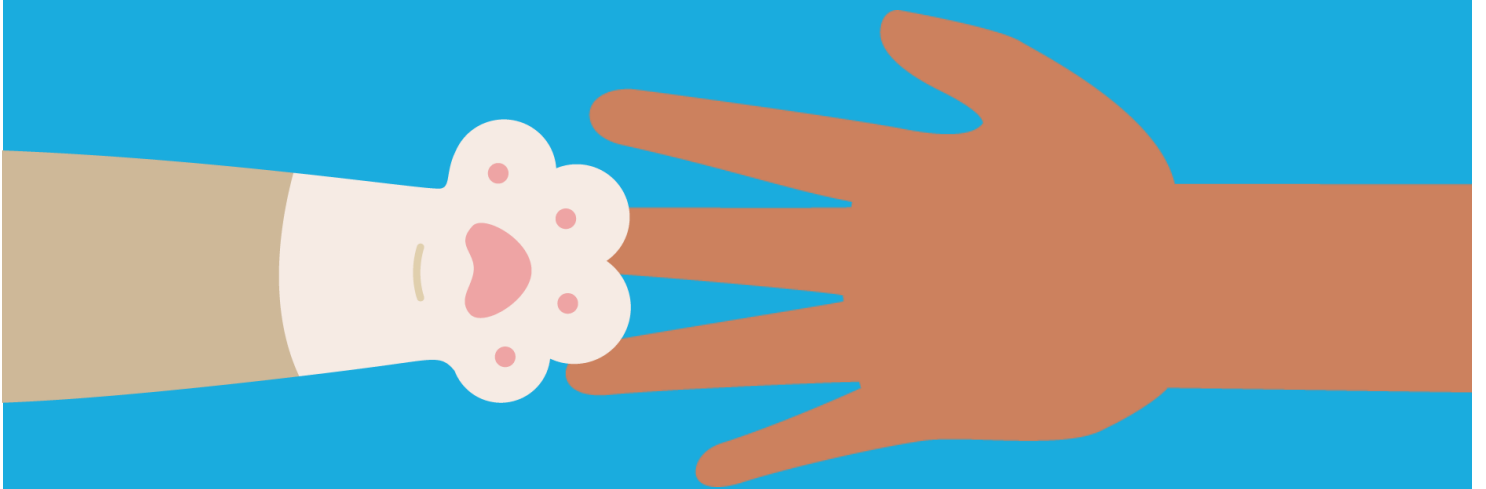


There's No Place Like Home

PET REUNIFICATION GUIDE



Austin Animal Center
RESOURCE LIBRARY

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It happens to the best of us. Sometimes our pets make plans without us. From missing pets to found pets, we'll walk you through everything you need to know.

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*This version of the guide is designed to be printed.
Please see page 18 for links mentioned throughout the guide.*



IF YOU LOST YOUR PET...

Check your home inside and out

Look in places your pet may have accidentally got shut into, like closets, cupboards, or sheds.



Walk around your neighborhood

Use the route they're used to and scope out their favorite spots. Ask your neighbors for any sightings.

Don't chase



Even the most social pet can get spooked. Your own friendly pet, when lost, may hide from people, run away if he sees a person, or he may even run away from you. Don't chase after a lost pet—they're fast and you'll only scare them more. Instead, sit on the ground; talk in normal tones, repeating their name and familiar phrases over and over again. A frightened animal will usually stick around, and after a few minutes or hours, come closer and closer.

TIP: In some cases, you may need to humanely trap your pet. [Contact TRAPRS](#) (1) (a nonprofit dedicated to securing lost pets) if you feel this is needed.



Text 'LostATX' to (844) 764-2125

You will receive texts with proven tips that guide you through the process, as well as links to local shelters.

*Msg & data rates may apply.



Post on social media

Facebook

[Austin Lost and Found Pets Facebook page](#) (2)

A 'go-to' in Austin; ALFP hosts a large community of folks who can help keep an eye out and offer tips and tricks.

Nextdoor app

Most pets are close to home and [Nextdoor](#) (3) has been crucial in reuniting Austin pets with their families. If you don't have an account, ask a neighbor to post on your behalf while you wait to be approved.

Craigslist

Post in both '[Pets](#)' (4) and '[Lost and Found](#)' (5).



Hang signs and talk to neighbors

Pass out flyers and post signs in the area where your pet was lost.

Ask your neighbors to keep an eye out and to check garages, sheds, porches, etc. where the pet may have gotten into.



Create a Lost Report

Report your pet as lost by [clicking here](#) (6).

Update the microchip

Make sure your microchip is registered and up-to-date. You can register any chip for free through [Found Animals](#) (7).

Notify your pet's microchip company to let them know your pet is missing

TIP: Know the chip number but not the company? Double check [here](#) (8).



Check shelters

Austin Animal Center is the municipal shelter for the City of Austin and unincorporated Travis County. View found animals [here](#) (9) and [here](#) (10). **Check daily!**



If you think your pet is posted on [this site](#) (9) and the kennel number says “With Finder (not at shelter)” you can contact the poster directly. If the kennel says, “FOUND” email animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov

Make sure to check surrounding shelters too. See the list of nearby shelters on the next page.

TIP: *Some pets look different in photos. Ask for a walk-through to check in person.*

Small Animals



The Austin Animal Center accepts every type of uncommon pet, from tortoises to ferrets. Keep checking our ‘[Other](#)’ (11) filter to view animals under our care.

Some rescue groups do accept animals directly. If you’re not seeing your pet [check in with our partners](#) (12) to see if someone has brought your pet to them.

To reclaim your pet from Austin Animal Center



If you have found your pet in our shelter, please call our Reclaim Hotline at 512-978-0556 or email animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov (hotline is answered daily during business hours).

Pets are held for 72 hours and then are released for adoption or transfer. Contact us ASAP!

Bring proof of ownership like vet records or a photo ID of your pet to reclaim.

Bring your photo ID-- we accept Driver's License, US or International passport, government or other official photo identification and Mexican Consulate cards.

AUSTIN AREA SHELTERS

MUNICIPAL SHELTERS

Austin Animal Center

Serves City of Austin & unincorporated Travis County

7201 Levander Loop, Bldg A | Austin, TX 78702
Website: <http://austininanimalcenter.org/>
(512) 978-0500

Bastrop County Animal Shelter

589 Cool Water Drive | Bastrop, TX 78602
Website: <https://bit.ly/2QI5PmE>
(512) 549-5160
Email: bcas@co.bastrop.tx.us

Pflugerville Animal Services

1600 Waterbrook Drive | Pflugerville, TX 78660
Website: <https://bit.ly/3gKAxWL>
(512) 990-7387
Email: pets@pflugervilletx.gov

San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter

Serves Hays County
630 E. Hopkins | San Marcos, TX 78666
Website: <https://bit.ly/3dwRHY5>
(512) 393-8000

Georgetown Animal Services

110 W L Walden | Georgetown, TX 78626
Website: <https://pets.georgetown.org>
(512) 930-3592
Email: animalsvc@georgetown.org

Waco Animal Care & Shelter + Humane Society of Central TX

2032 Circle Road | Waco, Texas 76706
Website: <https://humanesocietycentraltexas.org/>
(254) 754-1454

Williamson County Animal Shelter

1855 S.E. Inner Loop | Georgetown, TX 78626
Website: <http://pets.wilco.org/>
(512) 943-3322
Email: wcras@wilco.org

PRIVATE/ RESCUE GROUPS

Austin Humane Society

124 W. Anderson Lane | Austin, TX 78752
Website: <http://www.austinhumanesociety.org>
(512) 646-7387

Austin Pets Alive

1156 West Cesar Chavez | Austin, TX 78703
Website: <https://www.austinpetsalive.org>
(512) 961-6519

- PASS- APA's Positive Alternatives to Shelter Surrender Facebook page
- A program to help keep Texas pets owned by the public out of the shelter system

Central Texas SPCA

909 S. Bagdad Road | Leander, TX 78641
Website: <https://www.centraltexasspca.org>
(512) 260-SPCA (7722)
Email: appointments@centraltexasspca.org

PAWS of Central Texas- Kyle

500 FM 150 East | Kyle, TX 78640
Website: <https://pawsshelter.org/>
(512) 268-1611

PAWS of Central Texas- Dripping Springs

2965 FM 165 | Dripping Springs, TX 78620
Website: <https://pawsshelter.org/>
(512) 858-0016
Email: info@pawsshelter.org

Texas Humane Heroes

10930 E. Crystal Falls Pkwy | Leander, TX 78641
Website: <https://humaneheroes.org/>
(512) 260-3602

**Municipal shelters are run by a local government and accept domestic animals from the city/county they serve. Private shelters and rescue groups select animals from different sources as well as municipal shelters. Some private/ rescue groups occasionally accept owner-surrendered animals directly from the public.*



Beware of scammers

Lost-pet scams are on the rise. Consider proceeding with extreme caution or blocking people who:

- Say they have your pet but cannot provide photos
- Ask for reward money or finding fee upfront
- Say that the pet has been hurt and they need money for veterinary costs
- Say they are far away and ask for transportation costs
- Use photos of your pet that you had posted– often edited to be lighter or with a new background
- Make threats to your pet
- Make excuses about why you can't see the pet, either in person or in photos
- Ask for a Google verification code

In this day and age, it's not hard for people to send photos or videos of a pet. If someone is giving you hoops to jump through or something doesn't feel right, trust your gut.

Protect yourself



Recommendations:

- Avoid asking leading questions, such as “does the cat have extra toes?”
- Ask for details about your pet which are not on the flyer/post you made
- Ask for a microchip #
- Require photos or videos
- Do not share phone verification codes
- Meet in public locations (bonus- set up a virtual meeting first!)
- Do not give someone reward money until meeting them *and* getting your pet in hand



Don't give up hope!

**Many pets are found weeks or even months later.
Keep checking the shelter and Lost & Found pages regularly.**

IF YOU FOUND A PET...

Most animals are found close to home (on average just a few houses away) and a neighbor has a MUCH higher chance of helping a pet get home than a shelter does. If you're able to hold onto a stray pet while you look for the owner you're upping the odds that they'll find their family while helping shelters save space for sick and injured pets.

There are many ways to help a pet get home. Most owners are found through microchips and social media.

Text 'FoundATX' to (844) 764-2125

You will receive texts with proven tips that guide you through the process.

*Msg & data rates may apply .

Check for a chip

Microchips are tiny permanent IDs located under a pet's skin, usually located at the back of their neck or by their shoulder blades. However, sometimes the microchip can travel under the skin. Have the pet's full body scanned for a microchip as soon as possible.

Where to scan for free:

- Local vet clinic
- 24-hr emergency pet hospital
- Tomlinson's
- PetSmart stores with Banfield Vet Services



Once scanned, take a photo of the microchip number (to avoid human error) if you can, then enter the chip into [this website](#) (8).

- The site will tell you which company the chip is registered with
- Click the link to check the chip on that company's site if possible
- Check in with the company for owner info

Microchip dead ends

If you've found a chip but were told it's unregistered (or hit another dead end), email animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov with the chip number and your contact information. Shelter staff will do more digging and contact the owner on your behalf if the chip is in our system.

Post on social media

We're lucky to live in a city with a strong online community. 41% of people who reunited a found pet located the owner through social media.

Facebook

[Austin Lost and Found Pets Facebook page](#) (2)

A 'go-to' in Austin; ALFP hosts a large community of folks who can help keep an eye out and offer tips and tricks. Volunteers may also be able to help track down contact info for dead end microchip numbers.

Nextdoor app

Most pets are close to home and [Nextdoor](#) (3) has been crucial in reunited Austin pets with their families. If you don't have an account, ask a neighbor to post on your behalf while you wait to be approved.

Craigslist

Post in both '[Pets](#)' (4) and '[Lost and Found](#)' (5).



Search Lost Reports

[Click here](#) (13) to view pets who have been reported lost in your area.



Create Found Report

Let the Austin Animal Center know you've found a pet by creating a '[Found Report](#)' (14).



The pet will be posted both on our website and phshelter.com. The pet will stay active on our website for 14 days.



The owner can contact you through phshelter.com or if the owner sees the photo on our website, we'll put them in touch with you.



Contact us at pet.resources@austintexas.gov if you find the owner and we'll close out the report on our end.

Put up signs

Remember that not everyone is online. Put up signs or pass out flyers in the area where the pet was found.

TIP: Include photos (from different angles if you can), the animal's coloring and any special characteristics, and where it was found.

This [website](#) (15) has easy-to-use templates for found animal posters.



Talk to neighbors

Walk the pet around the neighborhood and see if anyone recognizes it. Never underestimate the power of word of mouth!

Get support



Call 311 if you need supplies such as food or crates to help you hold onto the animal, assistance for a check-up at Emancipet, or if you can no longer hold onto the animal.



Be kind

Pets escape in all sorts of ways from all sorts of owners. Keep in mind that pets can look very different after they've gone missing, and behavior that seems fearful could be what's normal for them.

Small Animals



The Austin Animal Center accepts every type of uncommon pet - from boa constrictors to sugar gliders. If you're unsure how to care for this animal please do not let it go. We will house the animal while we attempt to contact the owner or we will partner with an experienced rescue group to get it the care it needs.

Unsure if the animal you found is domestic or wildlife? Call 311 or post on [ALFP](#) (2) to ask for help identifying it.

Found Pet FAQs

What if I can no longer hold onto the pet I found?

The best thing for the pet is to stay within the community in which it was found. Check with neighbors to see if anyone else can foster the pet while the search for the owner is still ongoing.

You can submit a stray intake appointment at Austin Animal Center by [completing this form](#) (16). *Please note: due to high demand your appointment may not be for several days.*

If you cannot wait for an intake appointment, you can call 311 to request an Animal Protection Officer come within 72 hours to pick the pet up.

TIP: *Animal Protection does not pick up healthy, free-roaming cats. Please see section “Is This Cat Owned?” about what to do when you find a cat.*

What if I found the owner but they don’t want the pet back?

In Texas, animals are considered property. In order to best protect yourself, politely ask for the owner to relinquish the pet to you in writing. Include identifying information such as microchip number, rabies tag, picture, etc. You can then adopt or rehome the pet yourself.

If you cannot hold onto the pet while a new home is found, email the Pet Resource Center at pet.resources@austintexas.gov and inform staff of the situation.

What if the pet was abandoned or dumped?

Even if you witness someone dumping a pet, that doesn’t mean that was the owner. It could be someone who found the pet but didn’t know what to do. However, if you do witness an animal being abandoned or dumped, please call 311 to notify the police.

Many cats are so friendly and eager for food that you just can’t imagine them being outdoor cats so you suspect they were abandoned. Most likely this is not the case! Cats love to eat at as many homes as possible and as cat lovers know well, their loyalty isn’t always mutual.

IS THIS CAT OWNED?

Around 35% of owners allow their cats to free roam, sometimes without visible identification like a collar or nametag. In Austin, it's very common for people to let their own cats outside, or to be a caretaker to a free-roaming cat without an identifiable owner, also called a 'community cat'.

Community cats can be scared of people or they can be friendly. Caretakers often have a bond with the cats they feed.

Try the paper collar trick

Print out the template at the end of this section to see if the cat has a home nearby.

Check for a chip



Microchips are a form of ID that we can't see. Have the cat scanned for a microchip as soon as possible. You can scan for a chip for free at any vet clinic, 24-hr emergency pet hospital, Tomlinson's Feed, or PetSmart stores with Banfield Vet Services.

Once scanned, take a photo of the microchip number (to avoid human error) if you can, then enter the chip into [this website](#) (8).

- The site will tell you which company the chip is registered with
- Click the link to check the chip on that company's site if possible
- Check in with the company for owner info

If you've found a chip but hit a dead end or the company says it's unregistered, email animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov with the chip number and your contact information. Shelter staff will contact the owner on your behalf if the chip is in our system.



Ask neighbors

Ask around to see if the cat is owned or being cared for within the community. Some neighbors have strong attachments to individual community cats or know who the cat belongs to, so ask before attempting to rehome.

Spay/Neuter

It can seem a little daunting to know where to go or what to do about spaying/neutering a free-roaming cat, but we make it easy.

The Community Cats program is a partnership between the Austin Animal Center and the Austin Humane Society. Spay/neuter not only greatly reduces the number of homeless kittens but it also drastically improves a cat's life, making them healthier, less stressed, and less likely to fight.

Shelter-Neuter-Return

Shelter-Neuter-Return is a lifesaving program for healthy free-roaming cats over 3-6 months old. Citizens who have found and confined a free-roaming cat can make an appointment to bring it into the shelter for FREE spay/neuter before being returned to its community. This program is for both friendly and feral unowned cats.

At the time of your appointment, we'll scan the cat for a microchip. If one is found, we'll hold the cat for a stray period while we attempt to reunite the cat with its owner.

If no owner is found, we'll provide spay/neuter, rabies vaccine, age-appropriate vaccinations, and an eartip, which is a universal sign that a cat has been fixed .

Request an appointment for Shelter-Neuter-Return using this [link](#) (16).

Community Cats Trap-Neuter-Return

Community Cats is a program that offers FREE in-the-field trapping of unowned cats for TNR. The trapping is done by one of our dedicated volunteer trappers. This program meets cats where they are, and brings them back to the exact location where they were trapped from.

Email communitycats@austintexas.gov or call (512)-978-0504 or email for more info or to request trapping assistance.

Make sure you have a plan in place *before* you trap. Email communitycats@austintexas.gov with any questions.

Community Cat Medical care

If this cat has an illness or injury that is not urgent, but should probably get checked out, Austin Animal Center's Community Cats program is proud to offer medical vouchers for unowned cats with a medical condition or injury which is not life-threatening. This program benefits cats and the good Samaritans who help them.

Email the Community Cats program at communitycats@austintexas.gov for more information about our medical voucher program so the cat can be treated at a participating private vet. Vouchers are for unowned cats residing in the City of Austin or unincorporated Travis County.

Humane Trap Loan



If you can't get the cat in a carrier, request to loan a humane trap from

Austin Humane Society



communitycats@austinhumanesociety.org

(512) 685-0111

IS THIS CAT OWNED?

FOUND A HEALTHY STRAY CAT?

- Around 35% of owners let their cats roam freely, sometimes without visual identification, like a collar or tag.
- If a small portion of the cat's left ear has been surgically removed, that's called an 'eartip'. An ear tip is a universal sign that this community cat has already been spayed or neutered!
- Many outdoor cats may not have an 'owner' but do have a someone who feeds them and looks out for them who doesn't let them inside. Use this paper collar template to check!

DIRECTIONS

1. Print this template & provide any contact info you wish to share.
2. Using a small piece of tape, connect the *ends* of the paper only.
3. Don't cover the collar in tape! This collar needs to be able to break off for the cat's safety if it gets caught.
4. Give slack when placing around the neck—make sure there's at least 2 fingers of space beneath it.
5. Repeat if needed.

This cat has been visiting me and I would like to know if s/he has family before trying to help. If this is your cat please write your contact info or contact me here:

Our number: _____

Your contact info: _____

This cat has been visiting me and I would like to know if s/he has family before trying to help. If this is your cat please write your contact info or contact me here:

Our number: _____

Your contact info: _____

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T GET A RESPONSE

1. If you can get the cat in a carrier, have the cat scanned for a microchip—local vets can scan a chip for free.
2. Ask your neighbors if they know anything about this cat. Post signs and post on websites like Nextdoor, Craigslist, and Austin Lost and Found Pets Facebook page.
3. Contact the Austin Animal Center. We'll scan for a microchip and try to find an owner. We may also be able to offer free spay/neuter, vaccines, and parasite treatment! Email pet.resources@austintexas.gov for more info.



I FOUND KITTENS!

Kittens have the best chance for survival if they stay with their mom. Removing them puts them at risk. Follow this flow chart to help you make the best decision for the kittens' care.



HELPING KITTENS STAY OUT OF THE SHELTER

Every year shelters across the country are overwhelmed with the amount of kittens pouring in. If you are able to help the kitten find a home, or even just foster a kitten until they are about 2 months old/ weigh 2 lbs you'd be making a **big** impact to them and the animal shelter. You'd be giving them crucial socialization that will help set them up for success in a home and you'd be freeing up a kennel or foster home until the kitten can be spayed/neutered and adopted.



WHAT KITTENS NEED

- **A safe place for them to stay** - Give the kittens a warm, dry place to live indoors (a spare bathroom or even a dog crate equipped with a small litter tray works well; kittens can see out but not escape).
- **Age-appropriate food** - see next page for feeding suggestions.
- **Litterbox and litter** - going in the litterbox is a natural instinct for most kittens, so most won't need training!
- **Play and love** - this will make their transition to living with people much easier.

RESOURCES



The Pet Resource Center at Austin Animal Center is happy to share supplies such as litterboxes, food, bowls, toys, etc as donations allow. Email us at pet.resources@austintexas.gov!

FOSTER KITTENS

FEEDING

0-3 weeks

These kittens require bottle feeding with Kitten Milk Replacer if they've been orphaned. Check out [Kitten Lady](http://kittenlady.org) (kittenlady.org) for videos and information on how to bottle feed.

3-6 weeks

We affectionately call these kittens “gruel babies” because they eat a mixture of wet food and Kitten Milk Replacer (and usually end up with it all over their faces). It's best to also have a bowl of dry food available so they start to eat that as well.

6-8 weeks

Kittens should be graduated to dry kitten food at this age, although you can supplement with wet food.

EDUCATION

 Kitten Lady (kittenlady.org) has *tons* of great information on questions that come up when fostering kittens. Check out her YouTube page as well for easy tutorials: <https://www.youtube.com/kittenlady>

 Austin Animal Center's Kitten Nursery staff can provide guidance on specialized care. Email AACKittenNursery@austintexas.gov

REHOMING

See our rehoming section starting on page 15 for tips on setting your foster kitten up for success!

THANK YOU! Your care will help this kitten live a better life.

REHOMING A FOUND PET

Use the Found a Pet section to make every attempt to find the owner. In Texas, animals are considered property so please make every effort to find the owner before choosing to adopt a pet yourself or rehome them.

We recommend waiting at least 14 days before rehoming a found pet.

If you've hit all the dead ends and want to help your new friend on their next chapter, use these tricks to find the right adopter.

Get the pet checked out

If you can't find the owner, the best thing for the welfare of the animal is to make sure it's spayed/neutered, and up-to-date before rehoming. People are more likely to adopt an animal if it is "good to go" - PLUS it's best for the animal.

Spay/Neuter

The Austin Animal Center offers free spay/neuter vouchers, rabies vaccines, and microchips through Emancipet mobile locations to residents of Austin and unincorporated Travis County. Emancipet also offers low-cost spay/neuter to residents of any jurisdiction. Click [here](#) (17) to view the Emancipet schedule and learn details.

Low Cost Vets

This list is provided for informational use only. We do not endorse or sponsor the organizations listed below.

Preventatives

These locations help keep a healthy pet up-to-date on their vaccines but do not provide services like sick visits.

- [Emancipet](#) (18)
- [Prickly Pear Vet](#) (19)

Full Service

- [ZippiVet](#) (20)
- [Thrive](#) (21)

Get a microchip

We can schedule your pet for a free microchip at AAC. Email pet.resources@austintexas.gov to request an appointment.

We also offer free spay/neuter, rabies vaccines, and microchips through Emancipet mobile locations to residents of Austin and Travis County.

Click [here](#) (17) to view the Emancipet schedule and learn details.



Update a microchip

If the animal has a microchip and you were unable to reach the previous owner:

- Ask your veterinarian for a letter of ownership
- Reach out to the microchip company that the chip is registered to. Use the [AAHA Universal Pet Microchip Lookup](#) (8) find out which company the chip is registered with.



Spread the word

- Reach out to everyone you know - you never know who's looking!
- Post flyers
- Post on websites/apps such as:



[Home To Home](#) (22)- this is a rehoming page that AAC hosts and promotes



[Rehome](#) (23)



Austin Pets Alive!'s [PASS Facebook page](#) (24) (Positive Alternatives to Shelter Surrender)



[Nextdoor](#) (3)

Plan ahead

Before selecting an adopter, ask what they would do if it didn't work out. Let the adopter know that they can surrender the animal back to you (if you're ok with that), or make sure they're aware of their local shelter and resources. Look for an answer that seems thoughtful about an animal's needs and someone with a game plan if they hit challenges.

If they're in Austin/unincorporated Travis County, the Austin Animal Center can offer behavioral vouchers or support to assist pet owners considering rehoming.



Choose an adopter

It's important to feel confident that the animal you're helping is going to the right home.

Find example adoption applications:

 [Generic](#) (25)

 [Dog](#) (26)

 [Cat](#) (27)



Sign an adoption contract

An adoption contract can help provide a safety net for the adopter, the pet, and you. You can find example adoption contract [here](#) (28).

WEBSITES

1. TRAPRS	https://www.facebook.com/TheTRAPRS
2. Austin Lost and Found Pets Facebook page	https://www.facebook.com/groups/austinlostandfoundpets
3. Nextdoor	https://nextdoor.com
4. Craigslist 'Pets'	https://austin.craigslist.org/d/pets/search/pet
5. Craigslist 'Lost and Found'	https://austin.craigslist.org/d/lost-found/search/laf
6. AAC Lost Report	https://phshelter.com/BreedRequest/Lost
7. Michelson Found Animals	https://www.foundanimals.org
8. AAHA Universal Pet Microchip Lookup	https://www.petmicrochiplookup.org
9. Pet Harbor- Reported Found	http://bit.ly/phfound1
10. AAC Found Pet Map	http://bit.ly/aacfoundpetmap
11. AAC Pets	https://www.austintexas.gov/department/adopt-pet
12. AAC Rescue Partners	https://www.austintexas.gov/page/approved-partners
13. Pet Harbor- Reported Lost	http://bit.ly/phlost1
14. AAC Found Report	https://phshelter.com/BreedRequest/Found
15. Canva	https://www.canva.com
16. AAC Stray Intake Appt	https://bit.ly/strayintake
17. Emancipet Free Day Mobile Clinic (Austin and Travis County residents)	http://bit.ly/epetfreeday
18. Emancipet	https://emancipet.org/services
19. Prickly Pear Vet	https://pricklypearvetaustin.com
20. ZippiVet	https://zippivet.com
21. Thrive	https://www.thrivevet.com
22. Home To Home	https://home-home.org/shelter/aac/
23. Rehome	https://rehome.adoptapet.com
24. APA PASS Program Facebook page	https://www.facebook.com/groups/PassAPA
25. Best Friends- Rehoming	http://bit.ly/3kLs4pl
26. AAC Dog Adoption Questionnaire	http://bit.ly/3j7L15i
27. AAC Cat Adoption Questionnaire	https://bit.ly/3oCnCKw
28. Best Friends- Sample Contract	http://bit.ly/3ja9BCo