

What to Do if You Find a Dog

Under PA State Law, animals are considered property. While you **SHOULD** release it to the nearest animal shelter or animal control facility where the pet can be scanned for a microchip and reunited with their owner if they have one; it is not mandatory. However, if you choose not to release the animal to a shelter or animal control facility, you are completely responsible for finding their family. By law, you are not allowed to rehome or keep a pet without attempting to find their family and if you do, you are held legally responsible. While a shelter or animal control facility can adopt out (or euthanize) a dog after a specified time, there are no such guidelines for individuals who are not licensed. You can be held liable at any time if an owner is eventually found. If an owner comes forward and no longer wants the dog, after making certain that they are the legal owner; obtain a written release as this is the only legal way to rehome a dog. Please keep in mind a loved and well cared-for dog can look skinny and disheveled very quickly. There are also medical conditions and age that can play into an undesirable appearance. This is under no circumstances an excuse to keep a dog from its owner.

Lost animals can be afraid and dangerous and attempt to bite. If you can't get the animal to come to you, please do not chase it, but call animal control or police immediately. If the dog is friendly, look for tags for identification — even licenses and rabies tags can track down an owner.

- Make note of the time, date, and exact location where the animal was found and call your local animal control and dog warden to file a found dog report.
- Notify local police, shelters and vets local to where the dog was found. Take a picture and send it to those organizations and if possible share on social media, Craigslist, the local newspaper, and other lost and found pet help sites.
- Hang and hand out FOUND flyers.
- Animal must be scanned for a microchip.
- If you have a dog in your possession, you must by law, get them a rabies shot and license within 48 hours or you may be fine for not having proof of tags and/or a license.

IF YOU CANNOT TAKE THE ABOVE STEPS, THE ANIMAL MUST BE RELINQUISHED TO A LICENSED FACILITY OR SHELTER!

Following is the excerpt from Chapter 8 of Pa Dog Law that deals with lost dogs. Chapter 8 can be viewed here in its entirety- <https://www.animallaw.info/.../pa-dog-law-chapter-8-dogs...>

"§ 459-302. Seizure and detention of dogs; costs; destruction of dogs

(a) General rule.--It shall be the duty of every police officer, State dog warden, employee of the department or animal control officer to seize and detain any dog which is found running at large, either upon the public streets or highways of the Commonwealth, or upon the property of a person other than the owner of the dog, and unaccompanied by the owner or keeper. Every police officer, State dog warden, employee of the department or animal control officer may humanely kill any dog which is found running at large and is deemed after due consideration by the police officer, State dog warden, employee of the department or animal control officer to constitute a threat to the public health and welfare.

(b) Licensed dogs.--The State dog warden or employee of the department, the animal control officer, or the chief of police or his agents of any city, borough, town or township, the constable of any borough and the constable of any incorporated town or township shall cause any dog bearing a proper license tag or permanent identification and so seized and detained to be properly kept and fed at any licensed kennel approved by the secretary for those purposes and shall cause immediate notice, by personal service or registered or certified mail with return receipt requested, to the last known address, which shall be set forth in the license application record, of the person in whose name the license was procured, or his agent, to claim the dog within five days after receipt thereof. The owner or claimant of a dog so detained shall pay a penalty of \$50 to the political subdivision whose police officers make the seizures and detention and all reasonable expenses incurred by reason of its detention to the detaining parties before the dog is returned. If five days after obtaining the postal return receipt, the dog has not been claimed, such chief of police, or his agent, or a constable, or State dog warden or employee of the department shall dispense the dog by sale or by giving it to a humane society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals. No dog so caught and detained shall be sold for the purpose of vivisection, or research, or be conveyed in any manner for these purposes. All moneys derived from the sale of the dog, after deducting the expenses of its detention, shall be paid through the Department of Agriculture to the State Treasurer for credit to the Dog Law Restricted Account.

(c) Unlicensed dogs.--Except as otherwise provided by section 305, [FN1] any police officer, State dog warden, employee of the department or animal control officer shall cause any unlicensed dog to be seized, detained, kept and fed for a period of 48 hours at any licensed kennel approved by the secretary for those purposes, except any dog seriously ill or injured or forfeited with the owner's permission. The 48-hour period shall not include days the approved kennel is not open to the general public. Any person may view the detained dogs during normal business hours. Any unlicensed dog remaining unclaimed after 48 hours may be humanely killed or given to a humane society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals. No dog so caught and detained shall be sold for the purpose of vivisection, or research, or be conveyed in any manner for these purposes."

CREDIT(S)

1982, Dec. 7, P.L. 784, No. 225, art. III, § 302, effective Jan. 1, 1983. Amended 1996, Dec. 11, P.L. 943, No. 151, § 9, effective in 60 days; 2008, Oct. 9, P.L. 1450, No. 119, § 12, effective in 60 days [Dec. 8, 2008].

[FN1] 3 P.S. § 459-305.

DrupalAdmin. "Found a Stray." Western Pennsylvania Humane Society. N.p., 28 Jan. 2014. Web. 11 May 2017.

"Full Statute Name: Purdon's Pennsylvania Statutes and Consolidated Statutes. Title 3. Agriculture. Chapter 8. Dogs. Dog Law; Title 34 Pa.C.S.A. Game. Chapter 23. Hunting and Furtaking. Subchapter E. Dogs Pursuing Game or Wildlife. Chapter 29. Special Licenses and Permits. Subchapter C. Permits Relating to Hunting Dogs." Animal Law Legal Center. N.p., 01 Nov. 1970. Web. 11 May 2017.

Cole, Lisa. (2017, May 12). Personal interview with Thomas Wharry - Dog Warden Supervisor Region 4. 412-973-2539