

Return to Home

Challenge

The Return to Home Challenge Practices

1. All animals in the community have identification

- a. All animals leave the shelter microchipped and registered to both the chip manufacturer and Found Animals Registry whether adopted or Returned to Home
- b. All animals are registered to Petco Love Lost
- c. All animals leave the shelter wearing an ID tag and collar
- d. All animals are given free or low-cost ID tags and collars when needed at the shelter or in the field
- e. Organization offers microchipping to the public in a variety of ways (microchipping during open hours, community chipping/registration events and clinics, "Check-a-Chip" Event, individual outreach via Pets for Life-type programs)

2. Animals are returned in the field rather than at the shelter

- a. Microchips are scanned in the field and searches are run in field (by officer or through dispatch, etc.)
- b. Lost and found animals are posted on social media when staff receives call or finds animal
- c. Neighbors and community are engaged immediately to help find owner
- d. Ear-tipped cats are left in the field and not brought to the shelter (unless sick or injured)
- e. Signs are posted and door hangers are left for found animals

3. Return to Home polices and lost/found techniques are marketed to the community

- a. Website contains content about importance of microchipping and registration, including information about checking registration bi-annually
- b. Website contains content about how to find lost animals
- c. Website contains content about how to report lost and found animals
- d. Website contains report/list of lost and found animals (or posted to social media if unable to do so on website)
- e. Magnets and business cards with info for lost animals are distributed to the community
- f. Animals used in organization's marketing and communications have visible identification (collar/tags)
- g. Marketing campaigns are launched around Return to Home as the best outcome for the animal

4. Organization embraces a culture of Return to Home

- a. Staff/volunteer position dedicated to pet reunification is created or expanded
- b. Organizations create internal SOPs, tracking system and Return to Home goals
- c. Staff/volunteers are recognized/rewarded for successful reunifications
- d. LOS and cost of care for strays vs. cost of returning in field is recorded, analyzed and shared
- e. Stories of successful reunions are shared with team, stakeholders and community members
- f. Every member of organization is trained in lost and found practices (e.g., Maddie's University Lost Pet Reunification course)
- g. Lost and found practices are discussed at time of adoption or Return to Home, including species-specific information
- h. Return to Home policies include keeping/returning Community Cats to their environment

5. Organization works with community to help facilitate Returns to Home

- a. Partnerships exist with local businesses (e.g., veterinarians, pet supply stores), community centers and churches and other partners
- b. Volunteers in high stray intake areas foster lost animals and help look for owners
- c. "Finder to Foster" programs are implemented and used before animals are brought to shelter
- d. Utilities companies help find contact information for owners

6. Technology is used to help reunite pets and owners

- a. Skip-tracing subscriptions help locate people who have moved or changed phone numbers
- b. Social media is searched for lost pet posts
- c. Owners are called, texted, emailed, contacted via social media or visited in person
- d. Adoptimze software is used to create clear, accurate photos of lost pets to increase chances of reunions
- e. Administrators of the local lost and found pet pages are partners in reunification

7. Regulations and laws encourage Return to Home

- a. Redemption fees can be waived or reduced; if not possible, offer affordable payment plans; donation-based fund for redemption; mandatory s/n for redemption can be waived
- b. Review state and local ordinances against internal policies to ensure what is truly required by law and what is aiding or hampering Return to Home
- c. Organization works with owners to fix problems that lead to lost animals (e.g., mending doors and fences)
- d. Encourage microchipping over mandatory licensing
- e. Ordinances allow for Community Cats to remain in their environment

8. Other

- a. Something not on this list. Use your imagination!