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# How to Prevent Companion Animal Theft

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## Important Precautions for Protecting Your Companion Animals

- Most importantly, don't leave animals unattended in the car or yard, and don't let them run loose. Cats and dogs are safest and happiest spending most of their time indoors with you. Even if enclosed in a "secure" fence, neither dogs nor cats should be left alone for longer than a few minutes, and dogs should never be tethered or chained.
- Give your animal friend proper identification with a tattoo and/or a microchip (ask your veterinarian for information about these inexpensive, painless, life-saving procedures) and tags bearing your name, address, and phone number. It is a crime in some states to perform experiments on animals with tattoos or microchips.
- Watch for suspicious trucks or vans that seem to hang around in your neighborhood; get license-plate numbers, good descriptions, and photographs, and report them to your local humane society or police.
- If you are advertising an animal in the newspaper, never say, "Free to a good home," the five favorite words of bunchers (dealers who sell animals to laboratories).

## Additional Ways to Help Combat Companion Animal Theft in Your Community

- Identify your local dealers. A listing of licensed dealers in all 50 states is available from APHIS (4700 River Rd., Unit 84, Riverdale, MD 20737-1234). Ask for both "Animal Welfare: List of Licensed Dealers" and "Animal Welfare: List of Registered Research Facilities."
- Attend auctions where animals are sold and traded. Try to blend in with the crowd. Take photographs of dealers, their vehicles, and license plates. If possible, photos of animals should be close-ups and shown with a dealer or in his or her vehicle. Be discreet (use a hidden camera, if

necessary). Take notes on who is selling to whom. Once you determine who the suppliers and buyers are and what states they are from, you can connect with activists in these areas and set up a network for tracing stolen dogs and cats. Pay special attention to unusual-looking dogs; make fliers with their photos or descriptions and distribute them to animal shelters. Keep track of "lost" ads in newspapers, and watch for these animals to appear at auctions.

- If a stolen animal is positively identified in a dealer's possession, report it to USDA officials in your state, and demand that the dealer's records be inspected. Contact the media; the story might make headlines and curb more theft. Urge the animal's guardian to press charges against the dealer for possession of stolen property and for damages, such as veterinary bills.
- Place an ad in the classified section of your newspaper that says: "PET THEFT ALERT: Don't let your companion animal end up in a research experiment. Don't leave animals alone outdoors. Check out new homes thoroughly before you give an animal away. Call \_\_\_\_\_ [your phone number or PETA's] for more information." Contact PETA for a supply of "Finding the Right Home for Your Companion Animal" brochures; then call people who are advertising giveaways and offer to send them a copy.
- Spay or neuter your companion animals, and educate others about doing the same. With so many unwanted animals changing hands, dealers have an easy job of filling their kennels.
- Call your congressional representatives and ask them to support legislation that would protect animals from theft. One bill that would help protect companion animals from theft was introduced by Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii). His "Pet Safety and Protection Act, S. 668" would help ensure that stray or stolen dogs and cats are not used in research. Please see PETA's legislative guide (<http://www.peta.org/alert/leg.html>) for help in contacting your representatives.

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## PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

501 FRONT STREET  
NORFOLK, VA 23510  
Tel 757-622-PETA  
Fax 757-622-0457

PETA.org  
info@PETA.org

- Arm yourself with the facts by reading *Stolen for Profit* by Judith Reitman (Pharos Books, 1992), available from [PETAMall.com](http://PETAMall.com). This book exposes the medical establishment's funding of a national pet-theft network.