

## Finding an Animal in California

In California, it is legal to keep a found pet if you file a report with your local animal control or shelter, diligently search for the owner through microchips, flyers, and social media, and are prepared to potentially adopt the animal if no owner claims it within the legal holding period.

**However, it is illegal to rehome a found dog, as they are considered property,** and failure to make reasonable efforts to find the owner can be considered theft, with penalties potentially increasing to a felony if the dog's value exceeds \$950.

### Your Responsibilities When You Find an Animal

#### 1. Check for ID:

Look for a collar, tags, or a microchip by taking the animal to a local vet or shelter for a free scan.

#### 2. Report the Found Animal:

File a found pet report with your local animal shelter or animal control agency and browse their lost pet logs for a match.

#### 3. Search for the Owner:

Post "Found Animal" flyers in the area where you found the pet.

Use online resources like social media groups (Facebook), Nextdoor, and sites like FindingRover. Check local pet adoption/lost and found sites like Pet Harbor and register the animal on a registry like 24PetConnect.

#### 4. Cooperate with Authorities:

If a microchip is found, deliver the pet to your local animal control agency so they can contact the owner.

### Legal Implications of Not Following These Steps

#### Theft:

Because dogs and other domestic animals are considered property in California, intentionally rehoming a found dog without making a reasonable effort to find its owner is considered theft.

#### Felony:

If the found dog is determined to be worth over \$950, the penalties for theft could escalate to a felony.

### What to Do After the Holding Period

If no owner comes forward after you have made reasonable efforts to locate them and they have been returned by the shelter, you can legally claim ownership of the pet.