# **SAMPLE Reuniting Lost Pets Council Report**

Advise owner or owner's agent that information is required to be collected under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and will be stored in accordance with privacy laws. Reunification reports will be provided to councils to follow up any compliance matters.

Under section 84DD of the Domestic Animals Act (DA Act), vets must record and report on reunification of pets with owners. The requirement applies to a veterinary practitioner that accepts a lost dog or cat and doesn’t have an agreement under section 84Y of the DA Act with the council in which the business is located.

Business name:

Business address:

Business email:

Business contact number:

Your Council Authorised Officer email:

*\*items with an asterisk (\*) are optional but may assist you quickly identify animal on retrieval.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date pet accepted** | **Time pet accepted** | **Species** | **Breed if known\*** | **Colour\*** | **Suburb or municipality pet was found (if known)** | **Ph # of person who found pet (if known)** | **Microchip or council name and registration tag number** | **Name of person collecting the pet**  | **Phone number of person collecting pet** | **Owner’s name (if owner is not the person collecting the pet)** | **Owner’s phone number (if owner is not person collecting the pet)** | **Owner’s address** | **Date collected** | **Time collected** | **Notes\*** |
| 11/11/2021 | 11:15am | Dog | Jack Russell | Tan and white | Delahey |  | 95600001234567 | John Smith | 0425 111 111 |  |  | 25 Lost Dog Row, St Albans |  | 12/11/2021 | Council confirmed ownership. Owner provided licence ID |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat | Domestic Short hair | Tabby | Sunshine |  | City of Melbourne, 4567 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat | Domestic long hair | Black | St Albans |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat | Domestic Short hair | Black & white | St Albans |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat | Domestic Short hair | Orange | St Albans |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Dog | Pomeranian | Orange | Keilor |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat |  |  | Albion |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat |  |  | Footscray |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Dog |  |  | Albion |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11/11/2021 |  | Cat |  |  | Sunshine |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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1. Pet must be scanned for a microchip within 12 hours of being accepted by a vet.
2. Pet must be relinquished to the local council if:
	* You have concerns about the health or welfare of the pet.
	* You reasonably suspect it is a dangerous or menacing dog through information obtained on the microchip registry.
	* You reasonably suspect it is a restricted breed dog (i.e., Japanese Tosa, fila Brasileiro, dogo Argentino, Perro de Presa Canario, American Pit Bull Terrier).
	* Any other circumstance prescribed in the regulations apply.
3. You must make a reasonable effort to compare the lost pet’s microchip data with council registration data. This may include a phone call or email to the relevant council, or contacting council’s after-hours ranger service (if available).
4. The owner may send an agent (e.g., a family member or friend) to collect their pet is they are unable to. The agent will need to provide proof that they are collecting the pet on behalf of its owner. In either case, you must be satisfied that, based on the evidence and identification provided, the person collecting the pet is either its owner or their agent. If you are not satisfied, the pet must be relinquished to the local council. A statutory declaration can be used if a vet wants certainty under complex circumstances.

**Pet reunification checklist for vets without a section 84Y agreement**

1. [ ]  **Decide on whether to accept the pet**
* If you choose not to accept the pet, refer the member of the public to council, or an alternate vet or shelter that accepts lost pets for reunification.
1. [ ]  **Scan the pet for a microchip within 12 hours of accepting it**

If the pet doesn’t have a microchip (or it can’t be read), refer to the pet’s council registration tag, if it has one. If it has neither identification device, the pet must be relinquished to council.

1. [ ]  **Collect, record and keep information about lost pets**
* If the lost pet is a cat or dog
* Suburb or council pet was found (if known)
* Date and time lost pet was delivered to vet
* Telephone number of person who delivered the lost pet (if known)
* Microchip number, or if this is missing, council name and tag number on tag
* Name, residential address and telephone number of the owner collecting the pet
* If an agent is collecting the pet on behalf of its owner, the name, residential address and telephone number of the owner **and** the name and telephone number of the agent.
* Date and time the pet was collected.

You may wish to record the information via CAR’s Stray Recovery Database, the MS excel template or a manual paper method.

1. [ ]  **Determine whether the lost pet needs to be relinquished to local council**

The lost pet must be relinquished to council if:

* You can’t identify the owner of the pet within 24 hours of accepting it
* You can’t contact the owner as soon as practicable after identifying them
* You are concerned about the health or welfare of the pet or determine it has been neglected
* In the case of a dog, you suspect it has been involved in a dog attack
* You reasonably suspect it is a dangerous or menacing dog (e.g. through information obtained on the microchip registry)
* You reasonably suspect it is a restricted breed dog (i.e. Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro, dogo Argentino, Perro de Presa Canario, American Pitbull Terrier)
* The owner or their agent hasn’t recovered the dog within the recovery period
1. [ ]  **Make a reasonable attempt to contact your local council to compare microchip information against Council pet registration data to verify ownership.**
* A reasonable attempt could include either a phone call or email to the domestic animal management area of council during business hours, or contacting the council’s after-hours ranger service, if available.
1. [ ]  **Contact the owner as soon as possible and** **advise the owner of the recovery period for collecting their pet.**
* The recovery period is within 24-hours of the vet receiving the pet, or any other time the vet has advised the owner, or a time agreed between the vet and the owner.
1. [ ]  **Verify pet ownership with owner or their agent. The owner or the owner’s agent must prove to your satisfaction that they are the owner of the pet or the agent of the owner.**
* If you are unable to verify ownership with council, methods to help verify ownership may include:
	+ A recently paid council pet registration
	+ A veterinary bill that shows the pet’s microchip number; or
	+ A reminder email/correspondence from the relevant animal registry about updating microchip details.
* If you were able to verify ownership with council, current owner ID (e.g. licence) should be sufficient to reunify the pet.
* If there is any doubt over ownership you need to relinquish the pet to local council and let council determine ownership.
1. [ ]  **Report reunification data to council on a quarterly basis.**
* Reporting periods are:
	+ 1 January to 31 March every year;
	+ 1 April to 30 June every year;
	+ 1 July to 30 September every year;
	+ 1 October to 31 December every year.
* No report is required if there were no reunifications in the quarterly reporting period.
* If you are recording information via [CAR’s ‘Stray Recovery Database’](https://car.com.au/), information will be immediately available to councils on completion of the reunification record (meaning you do not need to submit quarterly reports).

**Which vet clinics and shelters do the new laws apply to?**

The new laws only apply to shelters and vet clinics without a council agreement under section 84Y of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (DA Act). If a vet or shelter has an existing 84Y agreement with council that includes management of lost pets, it must continue to operate under that agreement.

**Do vets have to be involved in reuniting lost pets?**

No, this scheme is voluntary for vets and not mandated. If a vet is unable to reunite lost pets, they may refer members of the public to other participating vets, shelters, or to council.

**How does the reunification process work for vet and shelter staff?**

Under the new arrangements, if a vet or shelter accepts a lost pet, they will need to:

• Determine whether the pet must be relinquished to council (e.g. if it is a declared dangerous dog or menacing dog, verifiable via the microchip registry. Dangerous dogs should also wear a distinct red/yellow collar).
• Scan the pet for a microchip. For participating vets this must occur within 12 hours; for shelters, this would need to occur within 24 hours as ownership needs to be determined within 24 hours of accepting the pet.
• Identify an owner within 24 hours of accepting the pet (through the animal’s microchip and/or council registration data/tag).
• Make a reasonable attempt to verify ownership by contacting their local council to compare microchip ownership information with council pet registration data.
• Contact the owner as soon as possible to collect their pet, including nominating a recovery period within which the pet must be collected. The recovery period is the first 24 hours since the pet was received by the vet/shelter, the period nominated by the vet/shelter or a period agreed between the vet/shelter and the owner.
• Ensure they are satisfied that the person collecting the pet is the owner or their representative. If ownership could not be verified with council, proof of ownership must be provided by the person collecting the pet; this could include a recent council pet registration renewal or vet bill.
• Record details regarding the lost pet, the owner and who collected it.
• Report quarterly to council on the pets reunited with owners. No report is required if there were no reunifications in the quarterly reporting period.
Record keeping and reporting requirements have been drafted in consultation with stakeholders and are prescribed in the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015 (DA Regulations).

**When do I have to relinquish a lost pet to a Council authorised officer?**

The circumstances in which lost pets must be relinquished to council by a vet or shelter relate primarily to public safety, uncertain ownership and animal welfare. Lost pets provided to a vet or shelter must be relinquished to council if:

• there are concerns about the health or welfare of the pet, or if it has been neglected.
• the shelter or participating vet reasonably suspects it is a dangerous or menacing dog (based on its microchip information or dangerous dog collar).
• the shelter or participating vet reasonably suspects it is a restricted breed dog (i.e. Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino, Perro de Presa Canario, American Pit Bull Terrier).
• the shelter or participating vet reasonably suspects the dog has been involved in a dog attack.
• the shelter or participating vet cannot identify the owner within 24 hours after receiving the pet, or cannot contact the owner in a reasonable time.
• the owner or their agent does not collect the pet within the agreed recovery period.

**What constitutes a reasonable effort to contact council to compare identifying information?**

A reasonable effort would include a phone call or email to Council’s domestic animal management area during business hours or contacting Council’s after-hours ranger service (if available).

**Why do I have to try to contact council to compare identifying information?**

Microchip registry information may not always be up to date, as owners sometimes forget to update details when moving or pet ownership is transferred. As council registration is renewed annually, council registration data may provide a more accurate or current data set and ensure the pet is returned to its lawful owner.

**What if I don’t get a response from council?**

If you have made a reasonable effort to contact council but have been unsuccessful, you can continue to reunite the pet using the microchip registry or council tag information. The owner or their agent will be required to provide proof of ownership that satisfies you that they are the owner (or were sent by the owner). This proof could include a recent council pet registration renewal or vet bill.

**What is the recovery period allowed for the owner or their agent to collect the pet?**

The recovery period is:
• the first 24 hours after the pet was handed in, or
• the period nominated by the vet or shelter, or
• a period agreed between the vet or shelter and the owner.

**Can a pet owner’s family member, friend or relative (agent) come and collect the pet on their behalf (e.g., if at work, sick, on holiday etc.)?**

Yes, if they can prove to your satisfaction they are the owner’s agent and have the necessary proof of ownership.

**What constitutes proof of pet ownership?**

Pet owners, or their agent, must provide some evidence that demonstrates ownership of the pet, as listed on the animal’s microchip and/or council registration information. This could be a recently paid council registration or veterinary bill that shows the pet’s microchip number and owner’s details.
If there is any doubt over ownership, the pet must go to council to determine the lawful owner.
Aggression or intimidation from the public should not have to be tolerated by vet or shelter staff. If a situation gets out of hand, police may be called in to manage any threatening situations.

**Why are vets and shelters required to report to councils? What will be reported?**

It is important that local councils, as the primary regulators for domestic animal management, maintain oversight of animal movements within their municipality.
Information will assist councils to follow up any relevant compliance matters, such as supporting owners to keep dogs contained to the property, or ensuring pets are appropriately registered.
Record keeping and reporting details are prescribed in the DA Regulations. It is a simple process for all participating vets and shelters, that requires collection and reporting of information such as:

* Phone number of person handing in lost pet (if provided)
* Date and time animal was handed in
* Whether the pet is a dog or cat
* The suburb or municipality the dog or cat was found (if known)
* The pet’s microchip number
* The council tag registration number and council name (if a microchip can’t be located)
* Owner’s name, residential address and telephone number
* Agent’s name and phone number (if agent is collecting the pet on behalf of owner)
* Date and time pet was collected.

**Do I have to advise council that I’m reuniting lost pets?**

While it is not mandatory, it is highly encouraged that you contact your local council to advise that you will be providing pet reunification services. This will promote timely communications when attempting to verify a pet’s ownership details, or seeking council’s assistance in circumstances where you cannot reunite the lost pet and must relinquish it to council.

**What if the cat or dog has no microchip or other identification tag or device?**

The reunification scheme only applies to lost pets with some form of ownership identification (i.e. microchip or council tag).
For facilities without 84Y agreements, the answer differs depending if it is a vet or shelter:

• Vets: If the vet is willing to accept the pet into their care, they will need to relinquish it to council.

• Shelters: The shelter will need to contact local council to determine if council wishes to retain custody of the animal. If it does not, the shelter is expected to keep the animal for the standard eight day holding period before adoption.

**Can people still take lost pets to council?**

Yes. For some people it may be more convenient to call their local council and ask them to collect a lost pet they have found.

If a local vet does not accept lost pets and you are unable to find an alternate local vet that does, it will need to be provided to a council authorised officer to reunite the pet with its owner.

**Can vets request a fee for reuniting me with my pet?**

Vets can request a nominal reunification fee, but cannot compel payment or make reunification dependent on payment.

Vets provide an important community service, and must balance this with competing business pressures. Some vets may request a nominal fee to help cover some of the costs involved in caring for and reuniting the lost pet, similar to council pounds.

If you are asked to pay a reasonable fee for reunification, please consider doing so to help vets to continue to provide this important service.

**What if council will not collect a lost pet from my shelter or vet clinic?**

Animal Welfare Victoria is encouraging councils to develop a working relationship with vets and shelters in their municipality that intend on providing lost pet reunification services.
Vets and shelters are also encouraged to reach out to their council to advise whether they intend to reunite lost pets. If so, agreeing on a communications process will assist timely ownership verification or pet collection. Developing relationships and agreed processes will benefit the welfare of the pet, identify practical solutions and assist with compliance.

**What if the owner/agent asks why we are collecting their information?**

You can respond by advising that confirming ownership is a legislative requirement under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. It seeks to ensure pets are returned to their rightful homes and enables follow-up if any mistakes are made.

**Do I have to collect the details of the person who found the pet or where they found it?**

If the person who delivered the cat or dog provides their contact number, it must be collected and recorded. While the requirement to collect the contact information of this person is not mandatory, the information may assist councils to follow-up any ownership, investigative or compliance matters.

**What if the pet’s owner is a client of the clinic?**

The process will be the same for any lost pet that you accept for reunification.

**Can I accept lost pets found outside of my local council/ municipality?**

Yes, you can accept a lost pet from another council area, however it may slow down any reunification process. It is preferable that lost pets are delivered to vets and shelters in the municipality they are found.

**Do I have to collect the details of the person who found the pet or where they found it?**

If the person who delivered the cat or dog provides their contact number, it must be collected and recorded. While the requirement to collect the contact information of this person is not mandatory, the information may assist councils to follow-up any ownership, investigative or compliance matters.

**What do I do if a cat or dog’s microchip information is not consistent with the council registration information?**

If the pet’s microchip owner details do not match council registration data, and you have doubt over legal ownership, you must relinquish the pet to council to determine legal ownership.

**Which council do I contact?**

In most cases, the pet will be from your municipality, so calling your local council should be sufficient. However, if you scan the pet’s microchip and it brings up an owner in a suburb in another council, you can either contact that council to verify ownership or, if you are a vet, just relinquish the pet to your local council.

To identify the council for a particular suburb, enter the suburb that appears on the microchip details here <https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/councils>.