

# Finding lost cats



“A lie is like a cat: You need to stop it before it gets out the door or it’s really hard to catch.”

—[Charles M. Blow](#) (*columnist*)

# What you'll learn

How to:

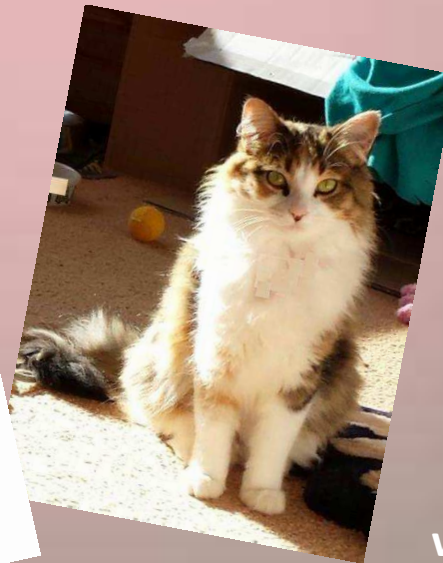
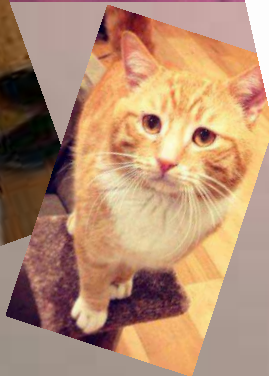
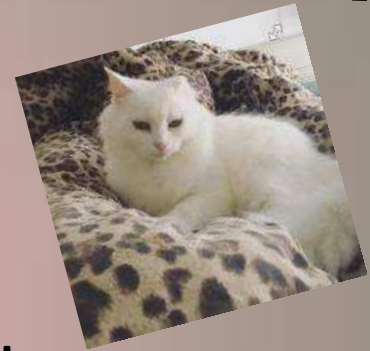
- keep foster cats safe inside
- find lost cats

# Why you need to know this

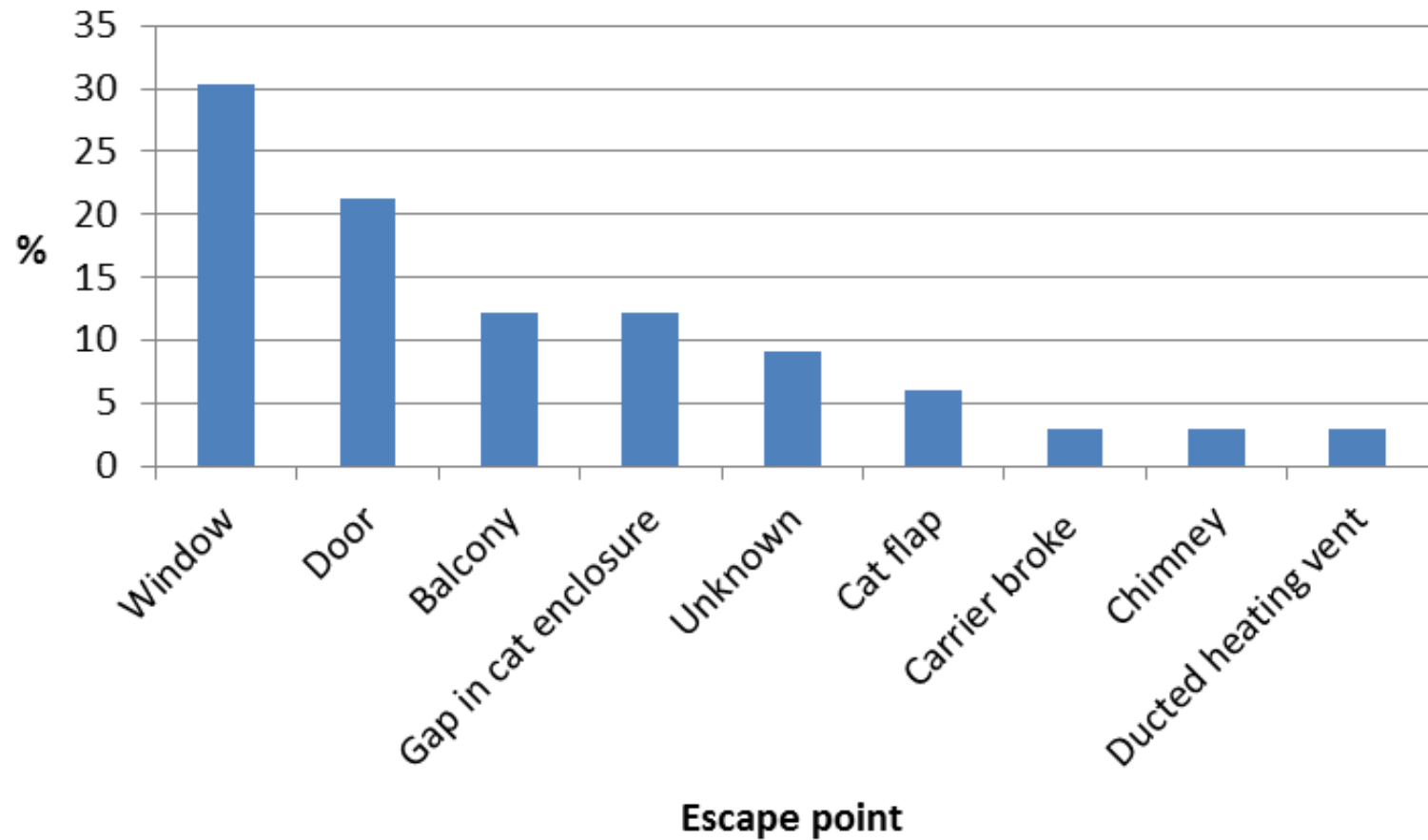
- One of your carers' cats may get out
- You will likely need to initiate, coordinate and help with the search

# Some statistics

- 2 year period, 3 rescue groups
- At least 1 cat lost every 2 weeks
- Some found, some not
- Mix of confident and scaredy cats



# How they got out



# What do we commonly do?



# What do we commonly do?

- Post on Facebook
  - ask people to share, search garages, keep a look out
- Put A4 fliers up around neighbourhood
- Call shelters and vets



# Why this doesn't work

- Only 2% of cats found at shelters
- Cats are territorial; they hide when displaced from their territory. They:
  - don't miaow
  - don't respond when you call
  - don't come for munchies
- Will hide until starving – 7 to 14 days
- No-one will see them

# Good news

Most cats stay close to escape point

– 3 - 5 house radius from where they got out



# Bad news

- CSI-type searching required
- Time consuming
- Prevention WAAAAAY better than cure



# Start at home

Could cat be inside? Check [this page](#) for possible hiding places



If not, search carer's own property, after dark with good torch:

- under house – crawl on stomach
- under deck
- garage – move everything
- shed - move everything
- wood piles
- shrubs
- rafters etc



# Fleur – under deck



Fleur's eyes,  
picked up via  
smartphone video

# Not on carer's property?

## Prepare search plan

1. Prepare fliers for doorknocking
  - Two per A4 page works well
  - Include larger photo on the back
  - Some companies may offer generous printing discounts for rescue animals

**\*REWARD\***  
**Lost foster cat**



- ♥ Tortoiseshell & white
- ♥ Rescue cat in new home  
– won't know area
- ♥ Microchipped & desexed
- ♥ 70 Anderson St, Newton
- ♥ Red collar & ID tag
- ♥ 12 January

Timid – will probably hide until starving

**Please don't approach** – she will run

If seen: 0411 222 333 0459 333 444

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Extremely timid – will hide until starving

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# Prepare search plan

## 2. Map out priority search area

- 3 house radius first
- 5 house radius second
- Googlemaps



# Prepare search plan

## 3. Doorknock – daylight best

- Doorknocking more effective than letterboxing
- Build relationships; get inside knowledge
- Weekdays: after people get home from work
- Weekends: late afternoon – more people home

## 4. Explain situation

## 5. Ask permission to search front and back, after dark, with torch

Most people receptive and understanding

# 3. Doorknocking

- When they open door, offer flier
- Explain:
  - Foster cat missing – inside only
  - Probably hiding
  - They won't see them
- Can you search their property after dark with a torch?
- Record details:
  - address, who you spoke to, latest search time
- Not home?
  - Leave flier under front door, not letterbox

# 'I'll keep a look out'

If they say they'll 'keep a look out':

- Explain they'll be hiding
- Cat will see and hear them before they do
- Searching is time consuming; crawling under houses is dirty work – don't want to impose on them

# 6. Search thoroughly

- At night, good torch – look for eyeshine
- Any small space
  - under house (crawl on stomach)
  - under deck (crawl on stomach)
  - in drains
  - garage (remove everything)
  - shed (remove everything)
  - wood piles
  - shrubs
  - rafters



# Trapping likely

- Once located, use humane trap to trap them
- [Trapping guidelines](#) available

# Didn't find them?

- Don't despair – they can be hard to find
- Cats can and do survive
- Try:
  - filming with smart phone in small areas
  - kitty buffet
  - wildlife camera
  - humane trap
  - other tools – see website

# Guidance online

Detailed instructions are available on  
[ScaredyCats website](http://www.scaredycats.com.au)



# Prevention is **WAAAY** better than cure

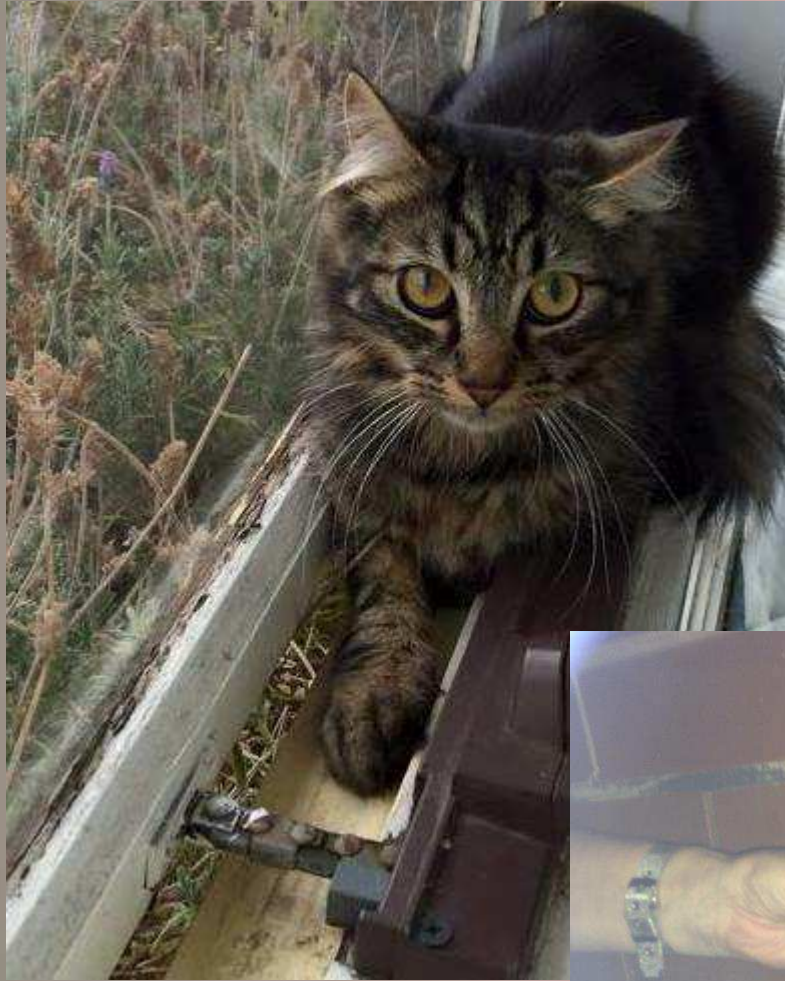
- Finding cats is difficult, stressful and time consuming
- Sisters Ebony and Crystal
  - Team of 6; >120 hours searching
  - Ebony found
  - Crystal hit and killed by car
- Easier to keep them safe than to find them



# Windows and doors

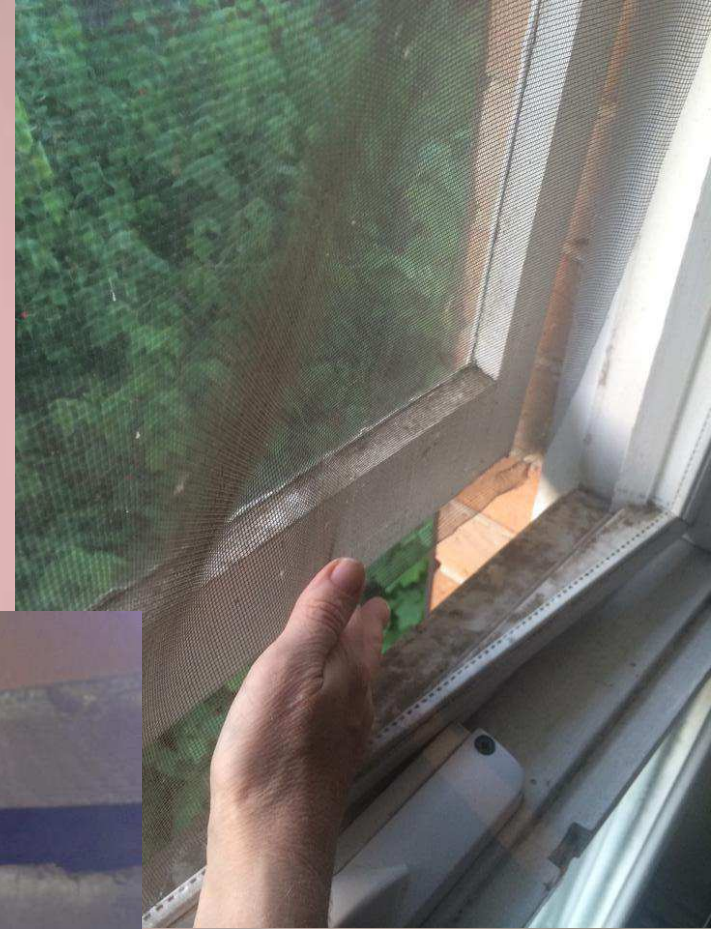
- Cats can get through tiny spaces
  - If their head can fit, their body can fit
  - Floating collar bones
  - They turn their head sideways to get through

# Cats got through these gaps



Xavier –  
not found ←

Akasha – →  
not found



Amarisa – found &  
adopted →

# Windows and doors

- Windows open maximum 2cm
- Take care when entering/exiting house – do the cat scoop
- Never leave a door open, even for a minute

# Crated cat?

- Great care still needed
  - scaredycats are the hardest to find
- Crates are not cat-proof!
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5AL-2iwznA>

# Collars and ID tags

- Cat-safe collars and ID tags with phone number(s) are recommended
- Distinguish your tabby from others in the neighbourhood
- Reduce risk of scaredycat being killed should they be trapped and impounded

# Conclusion

- Avoid cats getting out
- Use cat-safe collars and ID tags
- If they do get out, search thoroughly
- Don't rely on Facebook