

Survival Mode

When a dog is on the run, it goes into what is known as survival mode. Some dogs go into survival mode immediately, some take a day or more; it depends on their past experiences, breed and the circumstances that lead them to be lost.

Stress changed the dog you know and love and the instinct to survive kicks in. He/she now only thinks of food, water, shelter and staying safe. Staying safe includes avoiding people. Even the best trained dog, who would not normally ignore a direct command, will not come to its owner.

This is perfectly normal, but can become frustrating to owners who expect their dog to behave in a certain way. Fortunately, this state of mind is one that the dog should come out of once it is contained and has had time to relax.



■ Do Not Chase:

- Examples of chasing: walking, running, riding a bike, following in your car, using an ATV, UTV, dirt bike, scooter or skateboard.
- The dog will immediately view this as a threat and will run away.

■ Do Not Call Out:

- When a dog is lost and in survival mode, its brain does not slow down long enough to recognize that the “scary noise” it hears belongs to its beloved owner.

■ Limit the number of people:

- People want to help and always with good intentions. Limit vehicle traffic, scent and noise. These can push a lost dog out of an area when you want it to settle.

■ Limit flow of information:

- Once you are made aware of a sighting of your dog, limit sharing and posting on social media. Sharing sightings often results in bringing people to the location.

■ What to do if you see your lost dog:

- Your dog needs to approach you, so this may take time and patience.
- Sit, crouch or lie on the ground while keeping your dog in sight.
- Avoid direct eye contact – watch your dog out of the corner of your eye.
- Lure with smelly food – toss lightly without making eye contact.
- Speak sweetly and softly using key words your dog is familiar with.
- If your dog has a “dog friend”, take that dog with you. Dogs in survival mode are more likely to approach other dogs than they are people.