

Flea Collar Lost Pet Services

Flea-collar companies are offering a free hotline service. Simply register the collar's number with the company, and the service can help you recover a lost pet.

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If you buy a Scratchex All-Season Flea and Tick Collar, you get more than pest control: The Scratchex Pet Safety Center offers a Lost Pet Hotline. Each collar has a registration number and toll-free phone number. After purchasing a collar, the owner completes the registration form and returns it to the Lost Pet Hotline. If a cat is found wearing the collar, the rescuer calls the toll-free number and gives the operator the registration number. The Lost Pet Hotline will automatically respond with the phone number of the cat's owner if the collar has been registered.

The collars are available in food, drug, discount and some pet stores and cost about \$5 each; there is no fee for the Hotline service. Once the collar loses its effectiveness for flea and tick control (after about 11 months) and is replaced, you should call in the new collar's registration number.

Despite the fact that 175,000 of the collars have been registered, the figure represents a disappointingly small percentage of people who have bought the collars, said Julie Bohl of Combe Inc., manufacturer of Scratchex collars. Bohl knows the service works because of a blind cocker spaniel named Sadie. After disappearing from her home in Florida, she was found three days later by a woman who noticed the collar and called the 800 number. "The Scratchex Lost Pet Hotline people called to tell me someone had found Sadie," said Melinda Jones, the dog's owner. "They gave me the woman's name, and I was out the door and into the car in a flash."

A similar service is offered on a flea and tick collar by Pet Fone Lost Pet Recovery Service, produced by Lambert Kay. Each flea and tick collar is inscribed with a toll-free number and a registration number, which the owner mails in to the company. The collars are available at pet stores.