

Lost Cat Returns Home Following Legal Settlement

Rescue groups still concerned about ruling that pets must be listed before adoption.

A New York woman reclaimed custody of her lost cat on Jan. 21, over a year after another cat lover adopted the feline from a shelter and then declined a request to return him, according to The New York Times. The case was settled out of court, but a related ruling in December could still affect New York's 48-hour rule for lost pets.

Chavisa Woods, a 23-year-old poet, was reunited with Oliver, a Russian Blue, with the condition that she keep a collar on him, the Times said. Oliver was not wearing one when he escaped from an open door in Woods' Greenwich Village apartment in September 2004.

I'm unbelievably excited and relieved, Woods said.

But while the cat's home is now settled, a century-old law regarding pet adoptions is still stirring debate.

Jane Doe, the anonymous woman who adopted Oliver and renamed him Gatsby, initially claimed that Woods had lost ownership of the cat because of an 1894 law that gives owners 48 hours to claim a lost pet.

In December, a judge with the State Supreme Court said that the 48-hour clock does not begin until the cat is listed in a city registry. In Oliver's case, it was uncertain whether he was ever listed in the registry at all, the Times said.

Animal rescue groups are now planning to appeal that ruling, fearing that it could lead to a backlash of lawsuits when pets are adopted, and possibly when they are euthanized.

Posted: Jan. 24, 2006, 3 p.m. EST