

Make sure to microchip your dog or cat

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My name is Maggie Zeemont, I live in Picacho Hills with my two-legged parents. I am a female black Labrador/blue heeler mix. I am going to be 3 years old in September.

In February, the three of us went on a vacation by car to visit my two-legged brother and his wife in northern California. On the way back, we stopped in Long Beach for a family function. There were a lot of family and friends and other kids at the house when we arrived. I made a lot of friends, especially a 13-year-old boy called Billy.

My mom asked Billy if he would like to take me out for a walk, so they put my leash on, and a group of us kids went out. They said that there was a big park at the end of the street where a lot of dogs go, so we headed there. The weather wasn't all that great (it had been drizzling), but I was having a terrific time with all my new friends.

Little did I know that this would be the start of a traumatic experience. As Billy and I were walking toward the park, behind us another person was walking two larger dogs, one of whom turned out to be particularly aggressive. He pulled his leash out of his handler's hand, and started heading for me in a most unfriendly manner.

Needless to say, I freaked out. In order to protect myself, I backed out of my collar, which was clipped to the leash with all my ID tags. I headed at a dead run for parts unknown. So there we went, the dog walker chasing the other dog, who was chasing me, and the kids chasing me as well.

In my fear, I outran all of them, and turned the corner onto a pretty major thoroughfare. When I finally stopped to assess the situation, I found that I was not only scared out of my wits, but lost as well. I was so frightened that when one of the motorists stopped and opened his door, I hopped right in and sat cowering in his back seat. As it turned out, it was the best thing I could have done. The driver, Mr. Henderson, had two dogs of his own, and could see that I was lost and scared. The only problem was that he was on his way home to Fullerton, which was about 35 miles away. He did not have time drive around and look for my family and friends.

On the way, Mr. Henderson decided to stop at the Orange County Animal Shelter to check any reports of missing dogs. Much to his astonishment and anger, the animal shelter refused to help us! I still don't know why. We had to continue on to Fullerton. When we got to Mr. Henderson's home, he and his wife couldn't have been nicer. They gave me something to eat, and put a new collar on me. They even took me for a walk, which I really needed, and I met the two other dogs that lived there.

It certainly looked like I might be starting a new life in California. But then they hit upon the idea of taking me to see their own veterinarian, who was still in his office. The vet could tell that I had a microchip, which he scanned. When he got through to the monitoring company, Home Again, they knew all about me! My mom had contacted them right away, and they had even made up a missing poster with my picture on it, and emailed it back to her to print and put up locally.

Home Again had also notified local shelters and vets in the Long Beach area, as well as my vet here in Las Cruces. They gave the Fullerton vet my mom's cell phone number. At the time of the call, she was at the Long Beach Animal Shelter with the woman whose dog had originally caused all the problems. My dad was still scouring the neighborhood with his cousins looking for me. In just minutes, my mom was on her way to Fullerton to pick me up.

I am sharing this story to help other families. Thanks to the microchip, the whole experience had taken less than four hours. The moral of the story is, get your pet a microchip ID. It is inexpensive and it really works.