

Finding Them is Only the First Step

by Michael McCann

Finding a lost Greyhound is difficult: catching a loose Greyhound, who doesn't want to be caught, could be one of the most frustrating challenges one ever faces in Greyhound rescue. Over the years we've heard dozens of stories about Greyhounds running loose for months and even years, and thought to be impossible to catch. The truth is, any Grey can be caught, with time, tools and patience.

The most common scenario is a new adopter with a shy, or downright spooky Grey. Any new experience can set off a run for freedom: a loud motorcycle, something blowing in the wind, or just a stranger, moving to pet him. He panics, slips the collar and he's off. He hangs around the neighborhood, and sightings come in about him every day, almost always in the same general area. People hoping to catch him, chase him, and of course, he runs. As every day goes by he becomes more spooked. Soon, the adopter gets frustrated with the search and gives up. What to do?

The first thing to do is to set up a feeding and watering station. It should be near where the dog has been sighted. He's going to be looking for food, and if he finds a source, he'll keep coming back to it. To help him find it, put some stinky cat food in his bowl. Be consistent, Greyhounds are creatures of habit, and if you are consistent, he'll keep coming back every day to the same place at the same time

Three Methods of Greyhound Capture

Finesse Capture : If you are trying to capture a shy spooky hound, and don't have access to a live trap, a finesse capture may be your only option. Things to try are:

- When you or your volunteers see the hound, do not to chase or follow him, make him think you have no interest in him. Turn away, don't make eye contact, sit down on the ground, and if you have a hound with you, give some treats to him: there is nothing that will make a hungry dog more curious, than watching another dog eat.
- If he approaches you, stay on the ground, avoid eye contact and toss treats in his direction; gain his trust through his food motivation. Lick your lips, and yawn, a lot. These are "Calming Signals." (The book "Calming Signals by Turid Rugass is a good primer on the use of non threatening signals for stressed dogs.) Have a looped leash handy in case he approaches close enough.
- If he won't approach anyone, and is fond of his crate, bring the crate to the location and set it up. Put his food in the crate and feed him there. Get him used to eating like he did at home.
- If he likes riding in the car, leave the car door open overnight: you may have a surprise waiting for you in the morning.
- Leave his own bedding in places where he's been sighted, near a bowl of food. He may connect the bedding and food with home, and stay close to the area.

- If possible, set up his feeding station in a fenced area with a gate. Closing a gate behind a hound is a lot easier than trying to get him to come to you.
- A squawker, or predator call is a device that trainers use to recall hounds at the track. It usually works well for confident dogs, or dogs in a pack situation, like at the racetrack. It is a good tool to have in your bag of tricks, but be aware that it is nearly always a failure with shy, spooky Greyhounds. If the dog doesn't react to, or runs from the noise, don't use it again; he's not going to be any more attracted to it on the second try.

Live Trap Capture : Some animal control officers and SPCA chapters have animal traps large enough for a Greyhound; however, it is often a lesson in frustration locating and borrowing them. A humane live trap should be required equipment for Greyhound Adoption agencies. They are not inexpensive, but they can save hundreds of volunteer hours by offering a method of capture that is safe and effective. The best type of trap we've used is the Tomahawk Live Trap for large dogs. [Tomahawk Web Page](#) or the Midwest Live Trap, [Midwest Webpage](#). The trap ordered should be large enough for a Greyhound: at least 72" Long by 20" Wide, by 26" Tall. Smaller traps are not sufficient for Greyhounds, they tend to trip prematurely, the door falling on the Greyhound's back, allowing escape. Once a hound has a small trap trip like this, it will be nearly impossible to encourage the dog to enter any trap again. If your group can't afford one, perhaps you can pool resources with other groups in your area. It may save you many days of trying to capture a loose, spooky hound.

- Set the trap up in the area you have been feeding the dog. Once set up, feed the dog only in the trap. If the dog refuses to enter at first, don't take the food out of the trap. You want to train him to eat in the trap, he'll want to train you to take the food out of it.
- Greyhounds have sensitive feet. Most of these cage type traps have wire floors, so when setting the trap, put some sort of cushioning on the floor. A blanket, or straw will work well.
- It's not uncommon to catch other critters in these traps first. Just release them and hope for better luck tomorrow.

There are other traps available. One is a humane snare trap that throws a loop over the dog's head. It has not been effective in capturing Greyhounds, because of the unique shape of the Grey's head and neck. If used it must be constantly monitored, because a dog captured with this method can injure himself in his panic to get free.

Chemical Capture : This is the least effective and most dangerous method of capture. Greyhounds are extremely sensitive to drugs and anesthesia. To put drugs like Acepromazine into the dog's food is an invitation to disaster: the drug will take time to work, and in that time the dog will almost certainly be far from your search area. A drugged dog is susceptible to attack by other animals, may fall into a body of water, or wander into traffic. Do not try drugging a dog yourself; this method has been tried by dozens of groups over the years yet, we have never heard of a successful capture using ingested drugs.

The only method of chemical capture, which has been effective with Greyhounds, is a drug dart with a radio tag administered by a qualified technician. The technician must be able to get to within 25 feet of the dog to make a good shot. When darted the dog will run, sometimes for a good distance, until the drug takes effect. The radio tag will lead the searchers to the dog. This

method is risky for the dog, and a veterinarian should be available to administer a reversing agent, and to deal with any after effects of the drug. Some animal control officers have dart guns and are eager to use them. If the ACO has no experience with sighthound capture, or with radio tags, don't allow it. It is just too risky!

Staying the Course : When you are trying to catch one of these hounds, you will get frustrated, angry and just plain tired. Some take a long time to capture. When one method doesn't work, try another. When you start getting negative feedback from people who have already given up, ignore it. There is nothing more rewarding than bringing a hound home after a long time on the run and watching him thrive. Here are a few we know of:

Mike, Marshfield MA Seven Months from May 1997 to October 1997
Age 8 when escaped. Captured in a live trap. Lived quietly to age 14 with Bob and Sue Carson.

Barney, "The Ghost of Southbridge MA" Out for over a year. First reported sighting November 1999, Captured October 31, 2000 in a live trap. Lived a long and happy second half of his life with the author's family and three other hounds in Massachusetts. He was a gentle giant, a perfect gentleman, and wonderful companion. Barney died on May 9, 2007 after a short illness, three months shy of his 14th birthday. He left an empty bed, and a hole in my heart.

Junkyard Juliet, Pawtucket Rhode Island. Seven months, from November 2001 to May 2002. Captured in Live Trap. Now living happily in Buffalo, NY with Chuck and Sue Bobo and a house full of other Greys.(edited to add: Scarlett, once known as Junkyard Juliet passed away suddenly in September of 2005. She is sorely missed)

Phantom , Cincinnati, Ohio. Out at least ten months. First sighting June 2003, Captured, March 30, 2004. Chemical capture, darted by professional with radio tag. Age thought to be about 2 or 3. Now living happily with her captors in Missouri on a monkey rescue farm. (edited to add: Phantom died suddenly and unexpectedly in the spring of 2005. She was a much loved member of her family and is greatly missed.)

Mesa Boy, Out at least four months. Captured, August 30, 2003.
Age, thought to be about 3. Live trap capture. Loves riding in the car and sharing treats with his adopted siblings and Kent and Lisa Elrod in New Mexico. (Mesa contracted lymphosarcoma and died surrounded by his loving family on July 2, 2006)

Connor, Escaped from Camptown racetrack in Kansas, in November 2000. Spent 18 months on the run. Finesse capture. Now a favorite at doggy daycare, and of Peter the Poodle. Now living happily in Massachusetts with Marsha O'Neil. (edited to add: Connor contracted osteosarcoma in October 2005 and was released from his pain on December 30, 2005. He passed quietly in the arms of the woman who loved him so: Marcia O'Neil)

Cavan, Bennington, Vermont. Seven months. Escaped June 14, 2003, She was hand captured after being struck by a car, January 14, 2004. Age 5. Now with the author's family in Massachusetts and doing splendidly.

Campus Queen (Lady Grey), New Mexico. Loose at least 15 months, from May 2003- August 2004 on the Campus of Eastern New Mexico University. Finesse capture. Age thought to be about two. Five days after her capture she gave birth to a litter of 6 and adopted 8 more pups from an "Oops litter". She has been adopted by her captors.

Gus, San Augustine, TX. Gus was reported as a stray on December 1, 2004, and spent the next six months frustrating many attempts at his capture. Finally caught using a dart gun on June 4, 2005. Adopted in August of 2005 by Ed O'Neil, who after keeping track of Gus' story, felt a special connection and just had to drive all the way from Pennsylvania to adopt him. Here's a link to Gus' story, as it happened: [Gus, the whole story](#).

Marty, Corsicana, TX. Loose about a year, from May 2005, to May 27, 2006. Marty was seen running loose by a Greytalker as she drove through the town. She stopped and tried to catch him to no avail. She reported her sighting here on Greytalk, and within 17 days, volunteers from GALT, and GU East Texas were able to capture him after he ran into a shed. Marty had been hit by a car and suffered a badly broken leg, which had to be amputated. As of this writing is fully recovered, and living happily with his adoptive family.

Annie, Amarillo, TX. In the fall of 2005 Annie was running jack rabbits with her owner when she broke her leg. She was no longer of use to him, so he left her in the field, and drove off with the rest of his hounds. Annie was fed and kept alive by a local couple who tried their best for nearly a year to capture her, finally gaining her trust enough to make a finesse capture on November 7, 2006. As of this writing (4/14/07) she is being evaluated by a veterinarian and the expenses are being handled by GALT. Other than the badly healed broken leg she has a badly cut pad, two tick born diseases. A home has yet to be found for her.