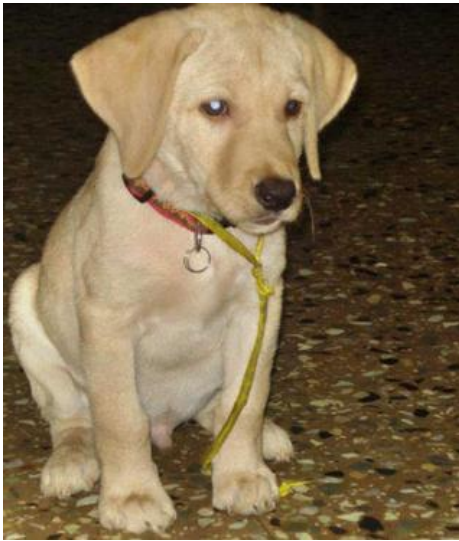


Are you at risk of pet theft?

- [SRIYA NARAYANAN](#)



“Our family is devastated,” says Vedavalli Srikanth whose four-month-old fawn-coloured Labrador puppy Simba was stolen from in front of her house. “A couple of men took him and sped away on a bike,” she says, adding that an FIR is being filed to help trace their pet.

Vedavalli is anxious to share her experience with owners of pedigree pets as they are at high risk of dognapping. “We used to let him out for short periods so he could relieve himself. We hope his disappearance will serve as a warning to all owners to be more careful.”

The stolen pet trade has grown considerably and several such thefts have been reported this past year. Says Dr. Mini Vasudevan, founder of Humane Animal Society, Coimbatore: “Stealing the love of someone's life is heartless, yet it's a sad reality inflicted upon many owners of pedigree pets. As long as we pay for pedigree animals, the stolen dog market will flourish unabated since the most common reason pets are stolen is their perceived monetary value and breeding potential.”

She advocates free of cost adoption of shelter animals for those who are yet to get a pet. “Instead of buying a dog, visit your local shelter where you will find many healthy, well-socialised puppies and adult dogs — including pedigrees — just waiting for that special home — yours!”

And for those who already have a pedigree pet, her advice is to be doubly careful. “There are several steps to prevent theft. Never leave pets in front yards unattended. Avoid leaving pets tied-up outside shops and other public places. Spay or neuter your pets. Attach an ID tag to their collar that says they are spayed/

neutered.”

As for Simba, Vedavalli continues to look for him and hopes she will soon be reunited with the much-loved family member.

SRIYA NARAYANAN