

## Device can track your stray pet

April 15 2009, By Sue Stock

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For owners of lost pets, the frantic search for Fido does not always end happily. Now one company is betting that even in a recession, pet owners will pay \$250 for some peace of mind.

Smaller than a business card, Spotlight is a rectangular box that attaches to a dog's collar and connects with satellites and cell phone towers to provide a GPS location for the dog at all times.

If your dog strays beyond the boundaries of a "safe spot" like the yard or driveway, Spotlight sends a text message to inform you the dog is out of bounds and gives its location.

If you have a smart phone with Web access, it will also provide turn by turn directions to your dog.

The company behind Spotlight is Positioning Animals Worldwide, or PAW.

It partnered with the American Kennel Club's Companion Animal Recovery division, which will provide telephone service for owners who have lost their dogs.

Spotlight is waterproof, less than 2.5 ounces and has a bright LED light you can turn on remotely to help locate your dog at night.

Still, despite all of its high-tech features, the price tag may be a deal-breaker for some pet owners.

Customers pay \$250 plus a monthly service fee. Like a cell phone plan, customers will be able to choose from a pay-as-you-go plan that starts at \$4.99 a month to an unlimited plan. The price of that plan is still being set.

PAW CEO Chris Newton said he believes people will pay to keep their dogs safe.

"This started over a year ago because a bunch of people started talking about what it's like when you lose your dog," Newton said. "We're not unique in loving our dogs. Everyone loves their [dogs](#)."

Industry statistics say he may be right. Despite the down economy, pet spending is predicted to rise to an estimated \$45.4 billion in 2009 this year, from \$43.2 billion in 2008, according to the American Pet Products Association.

Most of that increase is because pet owners have ramped up services like dog walking, dog sitting and preventative veterinary care, said Bob Vetere, association president. But, the market for GPS tracking devices is only growing, he added.

"People have become increasingly attached to their pets, and in many cases, they are willing to do anything they have to do to make sure their pets are safe," Vetere said.

Spotlight developers are counting on the device's waterproof nature, long battery life and high-tech, "next generation" features to distinguish it from other GPS tracking devices on the market, said Tom Sharp, CEO for AKC Companion Animal Recovery.

Some pet owners now opt for microchips, which are embedded under a dog's skin by a vet. Each chip contains a unique number that can then be

used to track down the dog's owner if the dog is found. But there is no real-time data from the microchip about the whereabouts of the dog.

"One of the most popular questions we get is, 'Is the microchip a GPS?'" Sharp said. "We have a natural customer base for this product."

When PAW begins selling Spotlight next month, it will be available on [www.pawgps.com](http://www.pawgps.com) and [www.akccar.org](http://www.akccar.org)

PAW is working to strike a deal to stock Spotlight in local stores and will also market the product directly to veterinarians.

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