

Searches for Lost Dogs Soared by 5,000% After Colombia Earthquake

Searches for lost dogs surged 5,000% after Colombia's earthquake, highlighting the impact on pets and the vital role of rescue dogs.

LIVERPOOL, MERSEYSIDE, UNITED KINGDOM, August 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On 10 August, at around 7.30 am, as millions of families were waking up to play with their pets or take them for a walk, the worst happened: a powerful magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck western Colombia, causing widespread destruction across several departments.

The latest government figures indicate that almost 300 people died in the disaster and another 4,000 were injured. Hundreds are still missing. More than 44,000 families had been affected as rescue teams continued working through unstable structures and repeated aftershocks.

Beyond the human tragedy, however, another type of emergency is unfolding: families searching for pets that became separated from them when homes collapsed or residents fled into the streets.

Google searches reveal another side of the disaster

An analysis of Google search data by Liverpool-based dog day care and grooming business Faye's Doggy Boutique found that searches for "lost dogs" increased by over 5,000% in Colombia on 11 August, the day after the earthquake.

Interest in practical emergency supplies rose at a similar rate. Searches for "dog carriers" and "dog bandages" also climbed by over 5,000%, suggesting that people were urgently looking for ways to evacuate injured animals or care for them during the unfolding crisis.

The data reveals a reality that can easily go unnoticed amid the tragedy. When disasters of this nature occur, humans and pets alike are affected. Besides becoming trapped inside damaged properties or being injured by falling debris, animals can escape through broken doors or windows and become lost on the streets. Families moving into temporary accommodation may also face the anguish of leaving a pet behind, sometimes without food and water. Moreover, some of these animals may have lost the families that gave them safety, nourishment, and love.

By 14 August, emergency teams had found 24 pets alive, all in Cali, while approximately 240 were still reported missing. Volunteers have also shared details of lost animals online in an effort

to reunite them with their families.

Yet there has also been good news amid the despair. On 13 August, 72 hours after the earthquake, when hopes already seemed to be fading, a dog was found alive and rescued by volunteers. The animal was carried from the rubble on a stretcher and treated by veterinarians for a leg injury and scratches. Its condition was reported as stable.

Colombia's four-legged national heroes

Rescue operations rely on a veritable army of specialists and volunteers. Among them are some very special heroes. Their names are Urko, Perla, Júpiter, Polo, Urbi and Nala. They are rescue dogs from the Disaster Response and Prevention Brigade of the Colombian National Army's Engineering Command. Deployed alongside their handlers in Cali and Pereira, with teams also working in Quibdó, they became symbols of the country's relentless effort to save lives.

Urko is a Belgian shepherd with eight years of service and the most experienced member of the group. Nala, a seven-year-old Labrador deployed in Chocó, can identify her handler's voice amid the noise of machinery and large emergency teams.

Polo and Perla are Labradors trained to locate people in damaged or collapsed structures. Júpiter, a young Belgian shepherd, specialises in following a particular scent. Urbi has the same specialism and was deployed in Cali.

Rescue dogs are essential after natural disasters thanks to their highly developed sense of smell. They can detect the scent of human beings even when a victim is buried beneath tonnes of rubble.

Their size and agility also allow them to cover unstable areas faster than human teams, directing rescuers towards places where specialist equipment and excavation work should be concentrated.

Their preparation involves exercises in simulated collapsed structures and repeated scent work. Dogs learn to move confidently across uneven surfaces and signal clearly when they detect someone. Successful searches are reinforced through play or another valued reward. To us, they are a powerful resource. To them, it is simply a game that involves finding a target and being rewarded with a little food and affection.

How you can help

If you want to join Urko, Perla, Júpiter, Polo, Urbi and Nala, along with thousands of other volunteers around the world, there are many ways to help. People living outside Colombia can donate directly to [Una Garra por Colombia](#), a fundraising campaign created by Fundación Ruta Animal.

The Colombian non-profit works to protect homeless and vulnerable dogs and cats across the

country. Since 2020, it has helped thousands of animals and supported local rescuers in communities where access to veterinary care is limited.

Those wishing to support the humanitarian response can also contribute to the IFRC emergency appeal, which is helping the Colombian Red Cross provide emergency assistance to affected communities.

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