

Stop the flights... there's a whippet on the runway

■ Airport forced to close runway and divert plane
■ Frantic staff spend 40 minutes chasing dog

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A RUNAWAY whippet brought flights at a runway at Manchester Airport to a standstill.

Managers at Britain's fourth busiest airport were forced to shut down a runway after the dog ran away from its owners and slipped through a manned gate.

Frantic staff spent 40 minutes chasing the animal across the runway tarmac.

A flight from Turkey was forced to divert to Birmingham while the chase continued, and a dozen other flights were delayed. Among those caught up in the backlog was DJ Clint Boon, who posted a message on Twitter saying: "Delayed flying from Paris

because of industrial action. Delayed landing at Manchester due to 'dogs on the runway'. I love this city."

A local family had been walking the pedigree whippet near the Rompers pub when it slipped away.

The animal, capable of speeds of up to 35mph, raced through a manned airport access point and into a cargo area on Saturday morning.

It was spotted on the runway at 10.40am - and crews instantly issued an alarm to cease all take-offs and landings.

Gary Brown, the airport's duty manager, said: "It took some time to catch



DELAYS A Whippet caused chaos at the airport

"The airfield is obviously quite a big area. Because of the delay there was a build up of flights and we had to suspend a Turkish Airways flight from Istanbul. It was

diverted to Birmingham. Basically, if there is any lost animal on the runway, we have to stop all flights straight away."

The whippet was eventually caught and later safely re-united with its family. Under the terms of the airport's operating license, a stray animal on the runway counts as an emergency - so no

planes can be allowed to land. An airport spokesman said it was unclear whether they would be liable for compensation.

It is the second time an animal has caused chaos at the airport this year. In July, a flamingo forced the runway to close for nearly five hours as it evaded capture.