

Microchipping: What is it and how can it ensure that your pet is always yours?

Each year, more than 10 million pets are lost. It can easily happen, no matter how much we all try to prevent it. If your pet is microchipped, there is a much greater chance that they will return to you safely. Microchips will last for your pet's life-time as there are no moving parts and nothing to replace.

A microchip is a small computer chip that has an identification number programmed into it. It is small enough to fit into a hypodermic needle. The implantation procedure is simple, routine, and painless, and it doesn't require any anesthesia. Your pet simply gets an injection just under the loose skin between the shoulder blades; it's a lot like getting vaccinated. Once the chip is implanted, a layer of connective tissue forms around the chip preventing it from moving about. The chip contains an identification code that is unique to your pet. Most veterinarians and animal shelters have scanners that can read that identification code. Most use universal scanners that will read all brands of microchips.

The microchip we use here at The Cottage Grove Animal Hospital is the Schering-Plough Home Again Microchip. Once your pet is microchipped we will register him or her with the American Kennel Club Companion Animal Recovery (AKC-CAR) program. This program maintains a national database and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We submit the personal and alternate contact information you have provided to us. When your lost pet is found, he will be scanned, the number will be called into the AKC-CAR (1-800-252-7894) and you will be notified immediately. A microchip provides permanent identification unlike tags alone. Remember to contact the AKC-CAR if you change any of your personal information.

The system works! More than 1 ½ million pets are enrolled in the AKC Companion Animal Recovery program and 126,034 lost pets have been reunited with their owners thanks to this program. The American Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals (ASPCA) also supports the use of microchip IDs for animal identification. They feel that it is the most reliable system for the recovery of lost pets.

Ideally, leashes, fences, and doors would be enough to keep your pet safe at home, but in reality, accidents happen, and your pet depends on you to protect him or her against the things that could go wrong. With a little effort now, you can take a big step toward ensuring that your pet will be with you in the future.