



Microchipping

A High Tech Device that can Rescue Lost Pets

When several people recently tried to claim a lost Golden Retriever at Contra Costa County animal shelter, it was a microchip embedded in the beautiful and sought-after dog's shoulder that proved the true identity of its owner.

"It's the only unalterable method of claiming your pet," says Julie Cummings, DVM, with Lafayette's Four Seasons Animal Hospital and president of the Contra Costa Veterinary Medical Association. "Tags and collars can be removed."

Since July 1, the Contra Costa County animal shelter has been scanning each lost cat and dog that comes through its doors, looking for an invisible identification number telling them the name of the rightful owner. The practice has reportedly been useful in reducing the number of unclaimed animals which are euthanized.

Makers of the chips say once injected, the device, which registers an ID number unique to the pet and is small enough to pass through a hypodermic needle, stays put in the shoulder tissue of an animal for life without causing allergic reactions. Handheld scanners then use radio signals to read the number through the pet's skins, allowing shelters to notify guardians if that their lost one is safe and sound.

Dogs and cats who repeatedly break loose from home are good candidates for microchipping, as are pets who refuse to wear collared ID tags. However, even indoor animals should be considered for microchipping because it only takes one open door or gate to lose a pet forever.

Costs can range from about \$20 to \$40, and there is an additional cost for registering the pet's ID number with the tracking agency the shelter calls after identifying the animal. Guardians should also provide the tracking service with a friend or relative to contact if they are traveling or unavailable.

But, says Cummings, it should never completely replace a tag with contact name and number hanging from the pet's collar. ARF microchips each of its animals prior to adoption. If an ARF cat or dog gets lost, ARF will be notified and will contact the guardian directly or the guardian may choose to add their name to the registration to be notified directly. Either way, the pet has a much greater chance of being returned safely and quickly. To learn more about microchipping, please contact a local veterinarian.

Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation

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