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FAQs about Microchipping Your Pet

What is a microchip?

The microchip is a tiny computer chip, about the size of a grain of rice, programmed with an identification number. The chip is enclosed in biocompatible glass and is small enough to fit into a hypodermic needle. Once an animal is injected with a chip, it can be identified throughout its life with this one-of-a-kind number.

What's the benefit of microchipping my pet?

Microchips are permanent and can't be lost, altered, or destroyed. Pet owners have been reunited with chipped pets that have been missing for years or that have traveled thousands of miles.

How does microchip identification work?

A special scanner is used to send a radio signal to the chip to read the identification number. The pet feels nothing when the scanner is placed over it. The number is displayed on the scanner, and the person reading the scanner can contact a national registry to find out who the pet belongs to.

How is the microchip implanted?

Microchips are implanted with a needle beneath the skin between the shoulder blades. They can't be felt or seen.

How early can puppies or kittens be injected with a microchip?

Young pets can be microchipped as early as 6 to 8 weeks of age.

How long does the microchip last?

The microchip has no power supply, battery, or moving parts, and it's designed to last the life of the pet. Once injected, the microchip is anchored in place as a thin layer of connective tissue forms around it. It requires no care and will not pass through or out of the body.

Does implanting the microchip hurt my pet?

Most pets react the same way to this shot as they do to any other. The microchip contains nothing that will burn or irritate tissue; it's completely biocompatible.

Does my pet have to be sedated to be implanted with a microchip?

No. Injecting a microchip is just like any other injection or vaccination. Anesthesia is not required or recommended.

Could my pet be allergic to the microchip?

The microchip is inert, smooth, nontoxic, and nonallergenic. Microchip companies say there is virtually no chance of the body developing an allergy or trying to reject the microchip.

If a veterinary clinic or animal shelter finds a microchip, how will they know who to call?

Animal shelters and veterinarians are finding chips in more and more pets. They are aware of the national registries and routinely contact them to obtain owner information regarding the pet. They then contact owners to advise them their pet has been found.

I have tiny toy breeds—can I still have them implanted?

Absolutely. Puppies can be chipped as early as 6 weeks old. The same size microchip and needle are used in pets even smaller than puppies and toy breeds, including mice, baby birds, and even fish.

How do I update information in the registration?

After your pet is chipped, you will be given information about how to contact the national registry to update your information. Remember to do this whenever you change your address or phone number.

Do shelters scan animals for microchips?

Yes, scanning pets for microchips has become standard practice in animal shelters.

Source: Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control