

## **Ask the Vet: What is a microchip, and how can it benefit my pet?**

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Microchips have been on the market for several years, and are a safe, reliable, and permanent method of identifying your pet if he or she is lost. The microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is placed underneath the skin between the shoulder blades. If your pet is found by a veterinarian or shelter that has a scanner, then the scanner is simply waved over the area and bounces a signal off the chip, revealing a unique identification number. The number can then be entered into a computer database where we can find your contact information and let you know where your pet has been found. You can also report your pet missing to the microchip company, and they will alert area veterinarians and shelters to be on the lookout for your pet.

So why should I get my pet microchipped? An estimated 10 million pets are lost every year in the United States. Possibly 2 million of these are stolen. If you report that your pet is missing and someone else tries to present it as theirs, scanning the microchip would trace the ownership back to you as it can not be altered. It is also estimated that only 14% of dogs and 4% of cats that enter shelters and humane societies get returned to their owners. Thirty to sixty percent of animals in shelters are euthanized because the owner can not be identified and they are unable to be adopted by a new owner. What about a cat that is always kept indoors, or a dog that is only allowed out on a leash? There is always a chance that a cat can slip through the door when you open it to greet someone, or that a leash will break when your dog decides to take off after a rabbit. Animals that are used to being contained find it more difficult to find their way home if they would get loose. And in the winter, it is easier for them to get disoriented with snow-covered ground or poor weather conditions. Microchipping is one tool that can significantly increase the chances of your pet returning home.

Much of the information for this week's column was garnered from [www.homeagain.com](http://www.homeagain.com), where more information is available for those with questions. Our office is also available to provide additional information, or to microchip your pet if you are interested.