

National Pet ID Week

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The third week of April has been designated National Pet ID Week. It is a time to increase awareness of the need to properly identify pets. We encourage pet owners to use one or more of the following pet identification methods to ensure the safe return of their pets should they become lost:



Collars and identification (ID) tags

Collars and tags are a reliable way to identify your pet should he become lost. Make sure your dog or cat always wears a current identification tag. Pet supply catalogs and stores, veterinary offices, and animal shelters often have forms to order ID tags. The tag should include:

- ▣ Pet's name
- ▣ Owner's name and address
- ▣ Telephone numbers (day and evening)
- ▣ Any medical problem requiring medication (may require separate tag)
- ▣ Veterinarian's name and number, if possible
- ▣ Reward offer should pet become lost

Steps to take to ensure identification tags are functional:

1. A collar worn for purposes of identification should remain on the dog or cat as long as he is in a situation where he could become lost. Ferrets should wear identification if they are taken outside for any reason.
 2. Do not use a chain choke collar as the identification collar. A broad buckle collar is best. The collar bearing the identification should be fastened snugly enough that it does not slip off over the animal's head when it is grasped by a person. Safety collars or harnesses are often used on cats; harnesses should also be used for ferrets.
 3. Common tags worn on the collar include:
 - Individualized identification tag
 - Rabies tag
 - Dog or cat license
 4. Check your pet's tags regularly. They can become lost, or unreadable with wear.
- In addition to identification tags, you can use an indelible pen to write a phone number on the collar itself. You may also be able to order broad buckle nylon collars with your phone number stitched into the collar.

Put a temporary tag on your pet when you move residences that includes a relative's or friend's telephone number. Many animals are lost when owners move. Use masking tape over the current tag or consider purchasing an instant tag, available at most pet supply stores.



There are several national tag registries that can be contacted if you should lose or find a pet. They include:

- ▣ 911-Pets Lost Pet Service Chicago: (773) 890-4911
- ▣ Petfinders New York: (800) 666-LOST or (800) 666-5678

Microchip identification system

Microchipping involves implanting a tiny capsule under the pet's skin between the shoulder blades. Microchips can be used on dogs, cats, ferrets, birds, and other companion pets. The tiny chip is about the size of a grain of rice. The owner then sends the information to a registering agency along with current contact and alternate contact information in the event the pet becomes lost. When a pet is found, any agency with an appropriate scanner, including many animal care and control agencies, veterinary clinics, and research labs, can quickly identify a code that links the animal to its owner through a national database.

NOTE: There is no universal scanner that can detect all brands of microchips. Before having your pet micro-chipped, contact both the chip manufacturer and your local shelter(s) to make certain that compatible scanners are present in your community.

The most common microchip manufacturers and registries include:

- ▣ AVID chips in California: (714) 371-7505; nationwide (800) 336-AVID or (800) 434-2843.
- ▣ Destron Fearing: Destron chips are marketed by Schering-Plough Animal Health and the database is maintained by the American Kennel Club (AKC): (800) 252-7894.
- ▣ Identichip in Scottsdale, AZ: (800) 926-1313 (uses AVID and Destron chips). (National and International Registries provide programs for breeders, shelters, and vets.)
- ▣ InfoPet Recovery: (952) 890-2080 ext. 100 or (800) 463-6738 (uses Trovan chips) and is endorsed by American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).
- ▣ Home Again™, microchip registry in conjunction with the AKC (for both purebred and mixed breed dogs): (800) 252-7894 or info@akc.org.

Tattoo identification system

Tattooing is a permanent ID system that involves marking a code on the skin of the pet. A tattoo can be placed in the pet's ear, abdomen, or on the inside of the pet's thigh. The finder of the lost pet calls a national database that uses the code to obtain the owner's current address and phone number. Each registry has its own coding system. This is an invaluable form of identification should a pet be stolen for research, since laboratories will instantly know the animal is not abandoned but a beloved pet.

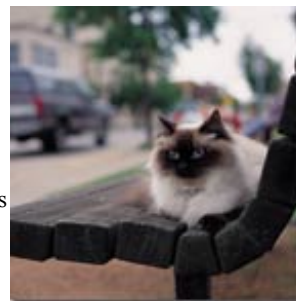
To look for a tattoo on the abdomen or thigh, lay the dog on her side. One person may stroke and calm the dog while the other gently lifts the dog's hind leg to examine the belly and thigh. Sometimes, the tattoo may be difficult to read, and it is often necessary to clip away the hair. If you have difficulty reading a tattoo, contact your veterinarian.

There are several national organizations that register tattoos (they generally also register microchips).

- ▣ [National Dog Registry \(NDR\)](#) New York: (800) 637-3647 / (800) NDR-DOGS. Usually, people register their social security number with the NDR. However, they will register any number.
- ▣ [Tattoo-A-Pet](#) is a National Registry: (800) 828-8667
- ▣ U.S. Found Maryland: (410) 557-7332
- ▣ The American Kennel Club (AKC) will help locate the owner if the dog is tattooed with the AKC number: (800) 252-7894. An AKC tattoo normally has two letters, then 6 digits and a two digit trailer, e.g., HM 010101-01 or HM 010101/01 or HM 01010101.
- ▣ ID Pet: (800) 243-9147 or (203) 327-3157. ID pet numbers normally begin with an "X."
- ▣ National Greyhound Association (NGA) is the registry for racing greyhounds: (913) 263-4660. Racing greyhounds are always identified by tattoos in both ears. The right ear tattoo is a two or three digit number followed by a letter. The month of birth is indicated by the first one or two digits, the year of birth within the decade by the last digit. The letter is the individual identification within the litter. The left ear tattoo is a five digit number which is the hound's litter number. For example, the right ear may read 123E, and the left ear may read 45678.
- ▣ Canadian Kennel Club (CKC): (416) 675-5511. Dogs bred in Canada and registered with the Canadian Kennel Club are generally tattooed in one ear or the flank. The tattoo is made up of three parts. First is a three character letter-number sequence which is the identification code of the breeder. This is followed by a number which is generated sequentially and refers to the number of dogs the breeder has registered that year, this is followed by a letter representing the year the dog was born. These letters are determined by CKC and some letters are not used. The most significant part is the initial, three character letter-number sequence. This identifies the breeder. An example of a CKC number: 7MR 1 C.

Other recommendations

- All cats and dogs need to wear collars with city or county licenses where required by law, and up-to-date rabies vaccination tags. Personal ID tags are essential backups.
- Keep your cats indoors and tagged. Many stray cats that end up at shelters are indoor cats that have slipped past an open door or out of an open window.
- Keep an up-to-date file with a written description of your pet that includes his size, markings, weight, and unusual features. Keep a current photo on file to use for posters or to take to the animal shelter should your pet become lost.



For information on identification of companion birds see our article [Types of Banding and Identification](#).