

MICROCHIPS: the only form of permanent pet identification

In 1995, as a young veterinary student, I decided to bring our family cat, Ripley, back to school with me. Before heading out, I stopped at a friend's house and Ripley accidentally got out of the car. We immediately searched the neighborhood, but he was nowhere to be found. I was hopeful; he was young, healthy and street smart and we were less than five miles from home. We put up signs, talked to neighbors, set up food and protection and contacted rescue groups, animal control and local shelters.

Had I had known the grim statistics, I would not have been so optimistic. The reality is that less than two percent of cats and 20 percent of dogs are ever returned to their owners. Most of these have some type of identification; Ripley did not. He was never found.

Every year in the United States, eight to 12 million animals enter the shelter system and approximately five to nine million are euthanized. A majority of these animals are strays—they belonged to someone.

Most will never be reunited, simply due to the fact that they cannot be identified. Pet owners assume that a collar with tags is adequate identification, but collars are easily lost or removed. The only form of permanent identification we can provide for our pets is a microchip.

A microchip is approximately the size of a grain of rice that is injected beneath your pet's skin.

The microchip has a special, unique code that is registered to the owner. Microchips have no battery and are designed to last for the life of your pet.

They require no maintenance, but it is important to keep your contact information current with the company's database. All the microchip companies make this very easy to do by phone, mail or online.

If your pet is found and scanned, this unique code is identified and the registry can be contacted to allow you to quickly reunite with your pet.

The technology used in the microchips and scanners is utilized worldwide, so you can be comfortable traveling with your pet, even out of the country.



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A microchip is easily implanted and can be done on an out-patient basis. At our hospital we frequently place microchips in puppies and kittens that are with us for their elective spay or neuter surgery.

We strongly encourage microchips for all our patients: young and old, working dogs, indoor cats as well as cats that venture outdoors.

I have personally placed microchips in pets ranging in age from five weeks to 16 years old.

The cost of a microchip can vary slightly depending on where you have it done and the brand used, but averaged over a 12 year life span, a microchip will cost you less than two cents a day. Just a couple of pennies will give you the peace of mind to know that your family friend has the best possible chance of being returned to you, should he or she be lost or stolen.

My own cat, Ripley, did not have a microchip, and his break-away collar did nothing to help us find him. For years I worried and wondered what became of my friend. My heart hopes that he was adopted by another family and lived out his life comfortably. I wish I knew then, what I know now. Ripley taught me a difficult lesson; all of my pets have been microchipped since then.

Dr. Susan Hubbard is the director at Greece Animal Hospital and has an extensive history of caring for pets in the Greece area. Dr. Hubbard started her animal care career at Stone Ridge Veterinary Hospital as a kennel worker and animal care assistant in 1986. A native of Rochester, she continued working at Stone Ridge during school breaks until 1994 and returned to the hospital as an associate veterinarian in 2002 before joining the Greece Animal Hospital in 2012. Her professional interests include dermatology, canine reproduction and dentistry. She is a member of the Genesee Valley Veterinary Medical Association and the American Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. Hubbard is also active in the care and treatment of puppies and guide dogs for Guiding Eyes for the Blind.

BOOK review

"The Animal Book"
by Steve Jenkins

A Collection of the Fastest, Fiercest, Toughest, Cleverest, Shyest — and Most Surprising — Animals on Earth. Animals smooth and spiky, fast and slow, hop and waddle through the two hundred plus pages of the Caldecott Honor artist Steve Jenkins's most impressive nonfiction offering yet. Sections such as "Animal Senses," "Animal Extremes," and "The Story of Life" burst with fascinating facts and infographics that will have trivia buffs breathlessly asking, "Do you know a termite queen can produce up to 30,000 eggs a day?" Jenkins's color-rich cut- and torn-paper artwork is as strikingly vivid as ever. Rounding out this bountiful browser's almanac of more than three hundred animals is a discussion of the artist's bookmaking process, an animal index, a glossary, and a bibliography. A bookshelf essential! Ages 6 to 10. \$15.83 on amazon.com

