

## **Ask Dr Jyl: Microchips Prevent Lost Pets**

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It seems lately I have had an unusual amount of lost critters come my way. I am forever hanging lost pet flyers on phone poles and endlessly driving the Orangevale side streets looking for broken down fences where pets may have escaped. Most people never dream their beloved tail wagger will leave the yard, but sometimes the gate is left unlatched or opened by mistake. Perhaps the gardener, utility company, or old man wind blows it open.

Here is a classic scenario...a dog is lost and has a leather collar but no tags. He is not neutered (by the way an unneutered male can smell a female in heat up to 6 miles away – *as if that's not motivation*). Sometimes they have been hit by a car and injured. We take them in and administer emergency treatment to keep them stable. Then the fun begins. My staff quickly jumps on the computer and makes lost pet flyers. Then we scan the animal to check for a microchip. If there is no microchip then we have no way of finding his home, other than to wait. If only the dog was microchipped. The pet could be returned to the owner almost immediately.

The facts are every 2 seconds a family pet is lost. Tragically, most never make it back home because their owners did not properly identify them. If your lost pet is found by a participating shelter, they will check him for a microchip with a special scanner.

So what is a microchip? Microchips were developed by a veterinarian. It is a professional way to identify your pet and it is proven to be safe and effective. A tiny microchip, about the size of a piece of rice, contains a personal, one of a kind identification number.

Microchips can be implanted through a hypodermic needle (just like a vaccination) under the skin. This is an inexpensive procedure (prices vary from \$20 - \$45), and can be done anytime. Any animal, such as dogs, cats, birds, pigs, horses, goats, sheep, exotics, and even fish, can be microchipped.

Once the animal is microchipped, if the pet is lost it can be traced by participating veterinarians and shelters by a special scanner. When an animal is found and the microchip number is located, they call a 24-hour national hotline. A quick search on a database is done and you, your veterinarian and an alternate contact is called and your pet is on its way home safely. The database is part of a global recovery network that has saved thousands of pet's lives.

Microchips have saved thousands of pet's lives and prevented grief and heartache for those pets' families. If you are interested in purchasing a microchip for your pet, please contact your local veterinarian or animal shelter.