

## Cat Microchipping: The Facts

### What is a microchip?

A microchip is a tiny electronic device the size of a grain of rice, which is injected by a vet into the loose skin between the cat's shoulder blades. It contains a unique identification number that is read using a scanner, which uses radio frequency (RFID). The ID number is recorded on a database, which is traceable to the owner.

### Why should cats be microchipped?

Every year thousands of pets become lost because they don't carry proper identification. Cats that appear to be strays or that have been in an accident are rehomed when their owners can't be found.

A common way for cat owners to identify their cats is to put a collar on them with a name and contact number, but some cats find collars uncomfortable and they are easily lost. Some uncomfortable.....

Microchipping your cat provides the perfect solution to lost collars and ensures that if they are found and handed in to a vet or rescue centre they can be identified immediately with a quick scan behind their head.

### Where can I get my cat microchipped?

The majority of veterinary practices and some animal welfare groups in this country now offer microchipping.

### How much does microchipping cost?

Prices vary depending on where you go but it can cost as little as £10. If you get your cat from an animal rescue centre it will normally have been microchipped already and that will be included in the price of the animal.

### Will microchipping hurt my pet?

A microchip is inserted under a cat's skin using a needle. This very quick and often painless injection is over in seconds and many cats aren't disturbed by the procedure.

### What should I do if my cat goes missing?

If your cat is found and taken to a vet or animal shelter, they will immediately check for a microchip using a handheld microchip scanner. If your cat has been microchipped, they will contact the microchip database organisation to reunite you with your cat. It is therefore very important ensure that the database your pet is registered with has your up-to-date contact details.

Some microchip databases provide services on their website to report your pet as lost. Check your pet's registration paperwork to find the details of the database with which your pet is registered and get in touch with them for further information.

You should also contact local veterinary surgeries and animal shelters to see if your pet has been taken to them. Ask your neighbours and others who regularly visit your neighbourhood, such as the postman, to look out for your pet.

You could also put up posters on noticeboards in your local schools, community centres and newsagents. You should be careful to only place posters in designated areas, as some pet owners have been fined for fly-posting by local councils after placing lost pet posters on trees, lampposts etc.

The RSPCA operates a lost and found register, and you can register your pet on the register by calling 0300 1234 999. They also provide a useful Lost and Found Contact List which provides details of other organisations that may be able to help with lost pets on their website [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk).

### **Where do missing cats go?**

Cats that stray often haven't gone too far from home but some missing cats can turn up hundreds of miles away.

One cat from Portsmouth was found under a lorry on a ferry as it docked in Spain 500 miles away whilst another which went missing from his home on the Isle of Wight must have also boarded a ferry as he was found 278 miles away in York.

Cats love climbing and exploring. Cats have been found inside an Argos delivery van, a beer delivery truck and in the spare wheel compartment of a BMW sports car. In Ireland recently a cat even managed to board a train and travel from the suburbs into Dublin.

### **What should I do if I find a stray cat?**

The first thing to do if you find a stray cat is to ask your neighbours if they know who the cat belongs to, as often cats believed to be strays actually belong to somebody nearby.

The RSPCA provides paper collars which can be downloaded from their website [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk). If the cat is tame enough to approach, you can write your telephone number on the collar and put it on the cat. If the cat is not approachable, do not attempt to attach the collar as you may risk being scratched or bitten.

If the cat is approachable and you are able to transport it to a local vet, they can scan it for a microchip, and if necessary access the lost and found service offered by the relevant microchip database.

If the cat is not microchipped and cannot be readily identified, you should contact a local animal welfare organisation such as Cats Protection or the RSPCA, who will be able to provide further advice and may also be able to take the cat into one of its shelters.

### **Are there any other advantages of microchipping?**

Yes. You can now buy cat flaps, such as the SureFlap, which learns to recognise your cat's microchip, keeping other cats out. SureFlap removes the need for your cat to wear a collar to operate the cat flap, instead using the cat's existing microchip like an electronic door key.