



California Animal Welfare Association

Promoting Excellence in Animal Care, Sheltering, and Law Enforcement since 1909

Microchip Scanning Recommendations for California Veterinarians

The California Animal Welfare Association (CalAnimals) supports the prompt and lawful reunification of lost or stolen pets with their families. Microchips are a customary form of permanent identification and have resulted in joyous reunions between lost pets and their families even after months or years have passed.

Many times, people who find a lost pet do what they believe is appropriate to find its owner but do not know about the microchip reunification process. Some may subsequently adopt this pet into their home unaware that it is microchipped and an owner is looking for their family pet.

Sadly, many instances have been reported to animal care and control agencies when adoptive pet owners discover months or years later that the pet they now value as a family member belongs to someone else. The original and legal owners, who have grieved the loss of their beloved pet, naturally demand its return.

CalAnimals provides the following recommendations to veterinarians when a newly obtained animal is brought to their practice:

- Veterinarians should ask the owner where the pet was obtained, when taking the history of the new pet.
- If the pet was found, given as a gift, or obtained in any way where it could have possibly been owned by another person, the veterinarian should recommend to the client that the pet should be scanned for a microchip. If the client agrees to allow the veterinarian to scan for a microchip, that authorization should be noted in the medical record.
- If the animal is microchipped, the veterinarian should advise the client of that fact and, depending on the situation, either:
 - Recommend the client take the animal to the local animal shelter to facilitate the reunification of the lost pet with its family. An additional benefit to this option is that if the original owner does not reclaim their pet, the client can legally adopt the animal through the animal sheltering and adoption process (check with your local shelter's policy) and establish a claim of ownership for themselves, or
 - Contact the microchip company and obtain the information regarding the identification of the person to whom the microchip is registered. Provide the information regarding the identification of the person to whom the microchip is registered in order that the client can return the pet (pursuant to the requirements set forth in B&P Code §4857).
- If the animal is not microchipped, CalAnimals strongly encourages veterinarians to recommend microchipping as a means of permanent identification for reunification if the pet becomes lost or stolen.
- When microchipping pets, we strongly encourage the veterinary office to register the chip at the time of implant rather than relying upon the pet owner to do so as this step is frequently missed. Immediate registration offers the greatest chance of reunification.

CalAnimals hopes this information is helpful to veterinarians and their clients, and that lost or stolen pets are given every opportunity to be reunited with their families.

CalAnimals represents and supports California's animal care and control agencies, SPCAs, humane societies, and other animal welfare organizations. Learn more at www.calanimals.org.