

Part 2 The Identification of Pets

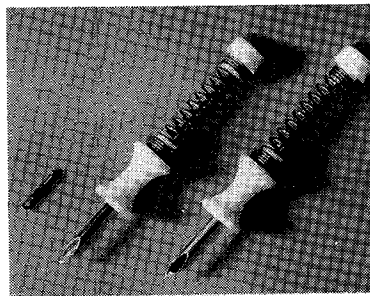
(Notes taken from speeches by
Veterinarians Ray Butcher and Richard Fry)

In Japan many pets are needlessly killed every year by the hokensho because they have no identification. The present system of pet registration is out of date and inefficient. The tags with a registration number are supposed to be attached to the dog's collar. However they can easily fall off or disappear if the collar comes off. The numbers themselves are only visible close-up. Throughout the world microchips are becoming standard for registration of pets; in Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia and most recently in Taiwan. In Japan, it is not the technology that is lacking, indeed many microchip companies are waiting impatiently for the go-ahead to launch their products, it is rather the bureaucracy and general lack of political interest in improving conditions for animals, that is holding things back.

□ Tattoos

Tattoos have offered a reasonably good method of permanent identification over the years. They have the advantage of being clearly visible on the outside of the animal.

There are however potential disadvantages:



Implantation sites

At present there is no international agreement on this. In the UK chips are implanted between the shoulder blades, because it is an easy place to insert them, but at the same time it is the common place generally used for injections such as vaccines/ antibiotics etc. For this reason, throughout Europe, microchips are generally inserted on the left side of the neck.

Scanning

All animals should be scanned, over their whole body, to check if it has already been 'chipped' before a new chip is implanted. This is because there are different implantation sites and also a possibility that the chip may migrate to another part of the body.

It is consider useful for microchipped animals to wear a disc on their collar indicating that they have been 'chipped'.

Richard Fry concludes:

The Second International

Bratislava, Slovakia May 1998
by Elizabeth Oliver

Companion Animal Welfare Conference

Ray Butcher examines the merits and demerits of various methods of pet identification systems.

"Pet identification is valuable for:

- * The basis of a pet retrieval system - rapidly reuniting lost pets with their owners
- * The identification of neutered feral animals as part of a control programme
- * The basis of a Pet Registration system
- * Proof of ownership in the event of theft
- * The basis of a National Vaccination Programme (e.g. rabies control)
- * Veterinary certification of Hereditary Disease Control programmes (e.g. hip dysplasia and eye diseases)
- * Veterinary Certification for Import/Export (animals in transit between countries).

Potential Methods of Identification

□ Collars and Tags

These provide a convenient way of giving details of the animals and its owner in a simple way. This method is cheap, requires no special equipment and is readily visible. However, tags and collars are not permanent and can easily get lost. They can also be removed or changed for the purpose of fraud or theft.

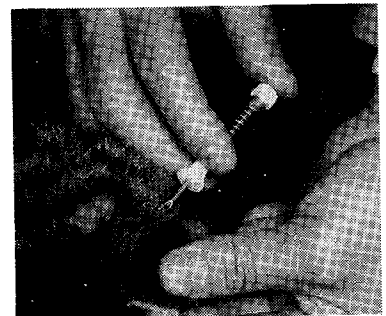
- * The technique is relatively painful to apply
- * The figures fade with time, usually in about 3 years
- * Hand-written characters may be difficult to interpret on an international basis (for example 6 and 9 could be wrongly read upside-down)
- * Much potential for human error in producing and recording the number
- * Possibility of tampering with number
- * On an international basis, the number of digits required for the code may be too many to fit, for example, inside a cat's ear

Because of the difficulties of the above systems, **microchips have evolved as giving us the best potential for an internationally agreed identification system.**

This system must offer:

- * A unique tamper-proof number that is present for the whole life of the animal
- * A system with enough potential capacity to identify all animals on an international basis
- * The method must be easy to apply, painless, safe and cheap
- * Any system must be internationally agreed
- * The system must reduce potential for operator error to a minimum.

"Microchips have come a long way in the past two decades. They originally developed because insurance companies were faced with false claims regarding fraud, theft and so on of pedigree horses. Nowadays microchips are used not only on horses but in registration of pet animals, keeping tracks on endangered species such as turtles, penguins, alligators and fish, and even trees are microchipped for security purposes. The potential uses are endless.



In the early days a number of incompatible systems were available but clearly the benefits could only be realized if there was an internationally agreed comparable system. An ISO standard was finally agreed in February 1996 and it will take some time before all systems are compatible with this international standard. "

Microchips are clearly here to stay. The number in use is increasing by half a million per year.