



# A dog's life with microchips

The government views this as a way to tighten controls on dog registration, but critics say they are barking up the wrong tree.

Asahi Shimbun

The Health and Welfare Ministry is being asked to consider ordering dog owners to implant a special microchip in their pets to help tighten controls on registration of the animals, but the move is causing howls of protest among dog lovers and veterinarians.

A committee set up by the health ministry to study ways of reforming dog registration has drawn up a report calling for a microchip-based system. The proposal will probably be submitted to the ministry this week.

The Health and Welfare Ministry hopes to revise ministerial ordinances and intro-

duce a new system by the spring of 1996 after reviewing the results of safety tests.

The Rabies Prevention Law requires dog owners to tag their pets. Even so, most of the 4 million dogs registered last year did not carry tags, making it impossible to track down the owners of strays.

Chip-based dog-registration systems are already in use in the United States and Spain.

A computer microchip in a glass capsule 2 x 10 millimeters is implanted into the neck of a dog using a special syringe. The chip stores the dog's identification number.

Tracing a dog's ID takes only a few seconds with an elec-

tronic device. The chip also stores information such as the owner's address and whether the dog has been vaccinated against rabies.

The chip can be used semi-permanently once it is implanted. In July, the health ministry instructed the seven-member group to study the feasibility of a chip-based system. The panel includes veterinarians, academics and members of the Japan Veterinary Medical Association, a group to prevent cruelty to animals.

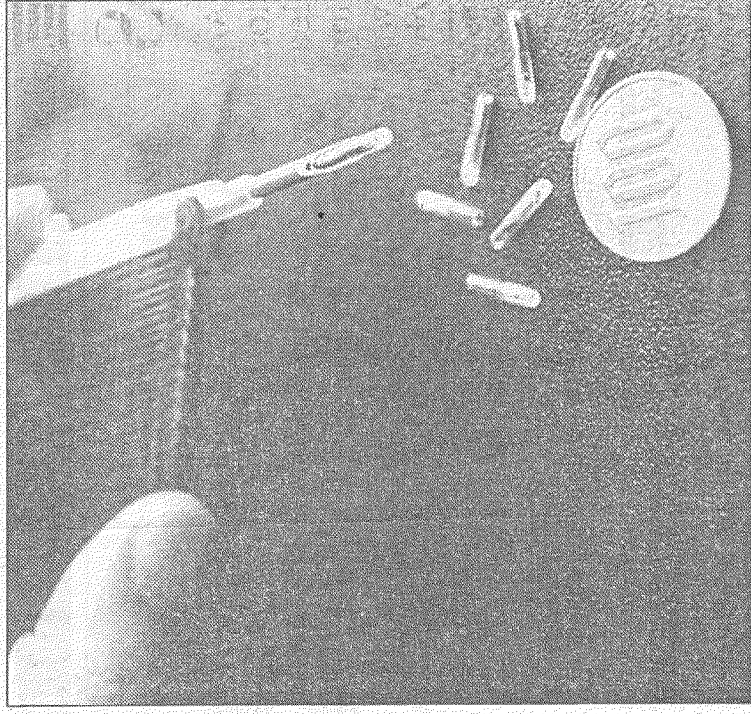
Members held their last meeting Monday and drew up a report that advises the government to consider introducing a chip-based system if safety is ensured. A representative of the animals welfare group said the government should be careful in adopting the system. The law on rabies was re-

vised this month to make the requirement of registering dogs a chore done once in a lifetime rather than each year—in effect paving the way for a chip-based dog-registration system.

"We have to implement thorough identification of dogs to ensure prevention of rabies," said Kunio Morita, an official at the health ministry's Veterinary Sanitation Division. "Chips are a promising method, and we are considering introducing the system."

Koji Nakano, author of a book on his relationship with his pet dog, opposes the idea. He calls it a "truly bureaucratic attempt to control life."

"It is outrageous," he said. "A dog's life is the same as a human life. The plan is no different from implanting chips inside humans to control people."



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**Microchips like these are inserted into the animal's neck with a special syringe. The chips store data about vaccinations against disease and the owner's address.**