



recommended. The AAFP believes that such pain management is necessary (not elective) and should be required for this procedure.

Identification of Cats

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The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) strongly believes that cats should carry both visible and permanent identification so that they may be returned to their owners if they become lost or stolen.

- (1) Accurate identification of cats is an essential component of cat welfare.
 - (a) Cats represent the largest owned species group in the United States, and each year many thousands become temporarily or permanently lost. Once cats reach animal shelters, less than 5% are ever reunited with their owners.
 - (b) Although there are several reasons why cats are less likely than dogs to return home, chief among them is that few cats carry tag or microchip identification. The end result is that more than 75% of cats admitted to animal shelters are euthanized.
- (2) There are two types of identification commonly used for cats.
 - (a) Visual identification methods such as a collar with a tag provide an immediate source of identification which anyone can use to contact the cat owner at any time. As many cats are found within a mile of home, this permits immediate recovery. Attempts to use ear studs or ear tags as collar alternatives have been associated with a high rate of infection and loss and are not recommended.
 - (b) Permanent microchip identification cannot be lost or altered and is thus a convenient failsafe system should the collar be lost or removed. An effective microchip identification program requires that current owner contact information be available in the pet recovery database maintained by the microchip manufacturer and that the cat is scanned by a veterinarian or shelter with a compatible reader.
 - (c) The AAFP believes that identifying cats simultaneously with both methods provides the most secure method for reunification of lost cats.
- (3) Microchip identification procedures are safe.
 - (a) Microchip implantation is a minimally invasive procedure, but should be performed by trained personnel or a veterinarian.
 - (b) Pain associated with the process of microchip implantation appears to be minimal, even in very small or young cats.
 - (c) Inflammatory reactions, neoplastic transformation, microchip dysfunction, and other adverse events related to microchips are rarely reported.
- (4) All cats should be identified.
 - (a) All pet cats should be identified, regardless of their lifestyle. Identification represents the most
- reliable method of reuniting cats separated from their owners following an accident.
- (b) Cats rescued in disaster responses should be microchipped if they are not already. This prevents misidentification of cats handled in large numbers and facilitates their management through the recovery process.
- (c) Feral cats in managed colonies have unique needs. All sterilized feral cats should be identified by removing the tip of one pinna so that they are recognized as members of a managed colony. Although collars with tags are inappropriate for feral cats, microchips provide a means of tracing feral cats to their caretakers, who may be able to return them to managed colonies if they become lost. Microchips also provide a means for individual identification of feral cats in colonies so that medical records may be kept current. Despite these benefits, microchip identification may not be feasible for all colonies.
- (5) Assuring identification should be included in routine wellness care of all cats.
 - (a) The wellness examination is the ideal time to discuss the importance of identification with owners. The benefits of both visual and permanent identification should be explained and compliance with identification should be recorded in the medical record along with other elements of the history.
- (6) All cats should be scanned for microchips.
 - (a) All cats should be scanned for microchips by veterinary practices, animal shelters, and rescue groups with a universal scanner capable of reading the 125 kHz (encrypted and unencrypted), 128 kHz and 134.2 kHz microchips, regardless of the reported source of the pet.
 - (b) Sheltered cats should be scanned at admission, at the time of sterilization surgery, and prior to final disposition. This maximizes the opportunity to detect a microchip during the sheltering process.
 - (c) Staff must be trained in the proper technique and documentation of scanning.
 - (d) Scanners must be capable of detecting all types of microchips, must be maintained in good working order, must be used with well-charged batteries, and must be validated with known microchips on a regular basis.
- (7) Owner contact information must be kept current in available databases.
 - (a) Veterinarians and adoption agencies should ensure enrollment in databases at the time the microchip is implanted.
 - (b) The facility implanting the microchip should retain records for the cat as a backup information source to the microchip manufacturer's database.
- (8) The microchip identification system must achieve international compatibility.
 - (a) The AAFP recommends adoption of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard for microchipping of companion animals in the United States.