

The subject I wanted to discuss today deals with companion identification. I did receive a correspondence from Andy concerning an identification process he has heard about using a computer chip that is implanted into a companion's body that can later be scanned providing information about the companion's home and caretakers. He wonders if this involves surgery and if so, is it painful?

There is indeed available a process for identification that involves the implantation of a tiny glass enclosed chip into a companion animal. The implantation process however does not involve surgery. The chip is introduced under the skin between the shoulder blades in dogs and cats using a syringe and needle. It is simply injected into the proper location with an absolute minimum of discomfort. I have implanted these chips in animals as small as lovebirds, birds about the size of a sparrow, with no problems at all.

There are other methods used for companion identification such as tags of various sorts, which contain pertinent information about the companion and are attached to some type of collar. Tattoos are also sometimes used to identify individual companions as well. Both of these methods can work well for identification; however, they do possess certain drawbacks. Tags can be lost with or without the entire collar. They can also wear down against each other rendering the information imprinted on them illegible. Tattoos can also disappear overtime and also can be altered in the case of companion theft. It always sounds strange to me to discuss theft in reference to companions; however, it does occur more commonly than many of us realize.

The advantages of the chip method of identification are several. The process is quite simple and can be done in less than ten minutes. The identification is as close to permanent as possible, requiring surgery to remove an implanted chip, and it gives your companion the best chance of being rescued if they are lost or otherwise disappear.

Veterinary offices and animal control departments maintain chip readers or scanners, which are turned on and passed over a companion paying most attention to the area between the shoulder blades. When a companion has an ID chip, the scanner will beep and register the unique number given to that chip and assigned to that companion. The chip number can then be tracked to the caretaker and the companion and caretaker can be reunited. Our local county animal control shelter is supposed to scan every animal that presents to them looking for ID chips. When a companion is found to have an identification chip, they then should be kept from the general population in the shelter minimizing the chances of contacting disease. The caretakers can then be contacted and the companion can be rescued.

I encourage everyone with a companion at home to consider chip identification. It truly is a simple procedure and is inexpensive as well. If you have already had the chip implanted in your companion, make sure you have him scanned when you visit your veterinarian. This will help to ensure the chip has not migrated and is working properly. Heaven forbid the chip will ever be needed, but it will be a blessing if that were the case.