

## ID Required for Your Dog

**Identification can get your dog home safely. Learn about the available options.**

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The Microchip Implant may be the most talked-about form of identification. An ID chip the size of a grain of rice is implanted by injection under the dog's skin, usually between the dog's shoulder blades on the upper back. A scanner wand is used to read the implant. The number retrieved would be registered with the implant company and would offer the owner's contact information. Helpful hints: Before getting the implant for your dog, call your local shelters and animal control to ask which microchip company's scanners they use. Make sure your veterinarian uses the same company. And after the implant is done, register the number properly and keep it updated. Pitfalls: The No. 1 problem with implants is that at least three companies make scanners, and they're not interchangeable. Your dog may have one company's implant, but if the scanner used by the animal control that finds the dog can't read the chip, the implant is useless. In fact, in August 2004, the Coalition for Reuniting Pets and Families (involving the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the American Animal Hospital Association, among others) called for the distribution of universal scanners nationwide that can read all microchips. Another pitfall is that the implant is not visible to the person who finds the dog. If the dog is not scanned as a matter of course by animal control or a shelter or vet, then the implant would not be found, and the dog would have no chance of a reunion with its owner. Finally, as Rapoport points out, chips can sometimes migrate under the skin, making finding them more difficult. The bottom line: This technology holds much promise, but as several organizations point out, there is cause for concern at this time. Until a universal scanner is commonly used, the chances for finding the implanted chip and retrieving its information is far less than many owners think when they opt for this method.