

## ID Required for Your Dog

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

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Each year, eight to 10 million pets stray or are taken from homes in this country, according to the American Kennel Club's Companion Animal Recovery (CAR) program. Only a fraction of owners recover them, despite the tireless efforts of shelters, animal control officers, and veterinarians. You can help increase the chances of a reunion in case your dog goes missing by using effective identification. The main forms are a collar and dog tag, tattoo, and microchip. A Collar and Dog Tag are the first, most visible line of defense. When a dog is found, a tag with an up-to-date telephone number (either yours or your veterinarian's) can reunite dog and owner right away. Helpful hints: Don't put the dog's name, your name, or address on the tag, says Mitch Rapoport, retired executive director of the National Dog Registry (NDR), a companion animal recovery registry founded in 1966. If someone steals your dog, knowing the animal's name will give him or her more control over the dog. And, of course, your identifying information may threaten your safety and privacy. A telephone number (especially a cellular number for a phone you always carry) will connect a good Samaritan or shelter with you just as well. Pitfalls: A collar and tag are easily removed. In addition, when the information is outdated, the tag becomes ineffective. The bottom line: Whether a dog has another form of identification, such as the tattoo or microchip, it should always wear an ID tag. A Tattoo is a permanent identifier. When a shelter, animal control, or veterinary employee examines the dog, they will look for a number on the inside of the left thigh or on the abdomen, according to Rapoport. A call to a dog registry can help find the owner. Helpful hints: Ask if your veterinarian's office tattoos dogs and what registry they use, such as the NDR. The tattooed number links with the owner's contact information. Pitfalls: If you don't register the tattoo or don't keep your contact information at the registry updated, the tattoo is useless. The bottom line: As long as you register the tattoo and keep your contact information current, this may be the best pet identification method available, Rapoport says.