# Microchip Information For Pets

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## Buy A Microchip

Pet owners usually don't buy microchips (aka chips) themselves, but rather get them from a vet, shelter or rescue.  But it's still good to know what type of chip you want so you can tell your vet or even go to another place to get the chip.  Vets should know the pros & cons of different chips & buy accordingly.

Chips come in 3 frequencies, 125 kHz (9 or 10 digits), 128 kHz (10 digits) and 134.2 kHz (15 digits) (ISO).  The 125 can come in encrypted (9 digits) and unencrypted (10 digits).  Not all scanners read all types of chips.  Some literature lists 134 rather than 134.2 but it really means 134.2 .

Only buy the 134.2 (ISO) chips.  ISO means it's a standard & is used around the world.  Most (but not all) vets will have a scanner that can read all chips.  But regular people who buy cheap scanners to help with lost pets will not be able to read non-ISO chips.  Also, if you want to travel to other countries with your pet, note that many countries require the 134.2 (ISO) chip.

Do not buy 134.2 (ISO) chips that have 900 as the first 3 digits.  They are poor quality & sometimes contain lead.  Sometimes the numbers are duplicated.  They are sold to 20+ companies & don't keep track of which chips are sold to which companies so you can't call a specific company to try to get pet owner contact info (in case the chip is not registered).  Although I'm told 900139, 900141 & 900074 chips are ok.

Some chips have an anti-migration coating to help them stay in place.  Chips come in various sizes.  Choose the size appropriate for your animal.  These sizes (mm) are suggestions, check with your vet:  1.25x7 (mice), 1.4x8 (cats, rabbits), 2.12x12 mm (larger).  Since the smaller chips have a shorter read range, don't use for thick-skinned, heavily coated or overweight pets.  Some chips read the pet's temperature & send the info to the scanner.

If you have or plan to buy a chip activated food bowl or door flap, be sure these devices are compatible with the chip you plan to buy.

If you want to make sure to get a quality chip, buy from the "Big 5":  24Petwatch, AKC Reunite, AVID, Datamars or HomeAgain.  Or at least buy from a company that has been around for awhile.

For pets that can wear a collar, a chip does not replace a collar & tag with contact info (or Airtag).  If your pet is found, the person might not have the time to get the pet scanned & then it's hard to tell what will happen to your pet.

## Register Your Microchip

A vet will insert the chip into your pet.  It's best for your pet to have only one chip, although once in awhile a pet will have two (scanner did not read an old chip, owner wants to add a temperature chip).  Having 2 chips is usually fine, but once in awhile, they interfere with each other.  If you have two chips, you must keep your contact info up to date for both chips.

You MUST register the chip in order to enter your contact information.  The cost of the chip & insertion sometimes includes the cost of registration.  If this is the case, ask if that is for just one year of registration or for the lifetime of your pet.  In any case, do not assume the vet will register it.  If the vet DOES register it, be sure to ask the vet how to update the info.

You do NOT need to register with the manufacturer of the chip.  You can register with ANY registry.  However, shocking as it may be, some shelters only check the registry associated with the manufacturer of the chip so you might want to register with them.  Choose your registry wisely.  Once you register, if you don't like the registry, you can use a different registry but some do not let you remove the chip from a registry so you will also be registered with the old registry.  Thus you MUST update both registries when your contact info changes.

Usually, if you've lost your pet & someone finds it & contacts the registry, the registry will contact you with contact info about the person who found your pet.  It does NOT give out your contact info, for privacy reasons.  However, sometimes the nanoCHIP registry will give out your contact info.  Thus you might not want to use it.

If you want to make sure you choose a quality registry that will probably be around for awhile, choose a "Big 5" (see above) registry.  Otherwise, there is a plethora of registries around with varying quality & costs.

Below are costs (US Dollars) for a basic lifetime registration with the Big 5 for an individual (not a rescue) as of Dec 2024.

Same      Other

| Company | Brand Chip | Brand Chip |
|---|---|---|
| 24Petwatch (1) | $0 | $0 |
| AKC Reunite | $0 | $23 |
| AVID (2) | $40 | $40 |
| Datamars (3) | $0 | $30 |
| HomeAgain | $20 | $20 |

Same Brand Chip = registry & chip are the same brand & the chip is prepaid
     e.g., having AKC Reunite prepaid chip & using AKC Reunite registry
     if not, usually price of Other Brand Chip
Other Brand Chip = registry & chip are different brands
     e.g., having AKC Reunite chip & using HomeAgain registry
(1) is part of huge corporation so will get lots of in house marketing email
     if use email to opt out, then will not get email about found pet
     so must call to opt out
(2) AVID registry is called PETtrac Pet Recovery Network
     listed in AAHA as Avid Identification Systems
(3) Datamars registry is called PetLink

When deciding on a registry, consider the following.  Note that some of these items might not be of interest to you.

does it have a fee for:
     registration
          if free, is that for 1 year or lifetime
     annual maintenance
     update of contact info
     contact if someone finds your pet
     registering chip that is not brand of registry
     transfer to new owner
be sure it's listed in the AAHA database (see You Have Found a Lost Pet)
does it sell personal info
easy to report lost/found pets
talk with person 24/7 for info or lost or found pet
allows more than 1 contact (e.g., yourself, vet, rescue)
allows more than 1 phone number for each contact
alerts shelters, vets, etc. if you lost a pet
allows picture
how easy is it to transfer to new owner
has option to remove registration from registry
if you have another pet at a registry, you might want to use that one for all pets
might try to upsell other products; buy only if you really want them
if is new/small registry, might go out of business

When entering contact info for the registry, best to use your cell number in case you are away when the registry calls with info about a lost pet.  If the registry allows more than one number, you can add other phone numbers you have and also include a friend who is out of the area.  That way if there is a disaster & there is no cell service in your area, your friend could still get the call.

After you have registered the chip & waited a few days, test it by going to AAHA & make sure the correct registry shows up.  Next, go to that registry & enter the chip number, saying it was "found".  Make sure you get a message saying your pet was "found".

Contact the registration company to find out what you should do if your rabbits are lost.  Ask them what they do to help find your rabbits.  With this information, if your rabbit is lost, you'll know how to contact the registration company & know what data they need.

If you don't know if your chip is registered, scan the chip to get the number.  Then use the AAHA database to find out if/where it is registered.  If it is registered but you don't have login info, contact that registry.  They will probably contact the current registered person.  If it is you, then ask how to login.  If it is registered to someone else (e.g., you got the pet at a shelter & it's already registered), tell them you have the pet now.  They will probably contact the person who currently has the registration to ask for permission to transfer ownership.  If they don't hear from them after some period of time (e.g., 2 months), then in some cases, they will then let you register.  If the chip is not registered, then register the chip.

## Annual Maintenance

Once a year (mark your calendar), scan the chip.  This is to make sure the chip is still working & can be found.  Then search the AAHA database to make sure the chip shows in the correct registry & only that registry.  Login to the registry to make sure it has not gone out of business, they have not cancelled your account & your information is correct.  Test by saying your pet was "found", as described above.

When you change any of your contact info, update this info in the registry.

## You Have Found a Lost Pet

If you have found a pet, scan it (see How To Scan below) to find a chip number.  If you don't have a scanner, note that some vets, pet stores, shelters & rescues will scan the pet, often at no cost.  If it's after hours, 24 hour emergency vet clinics might do this.  If a chip is not found, ask what frequencies the scanner reads.  You might be told "all" or "it's universal", but often, they do not know.  If you want to put more effort into it, get the make/model of the scanner & look it up.  If it doesn't read all frequencies, you could take the pet to another place & hope they have a scanner that reads all frequencies.

Then search the AAHA database at this website:

www.petmicrochiplookup.org/

Scroll down and enter the chip number.  Do not enter spaces or punctuation.  No other info is needed.  Click Search.  Scroll down to see the results.  Under "Microchip enrolled with", it shows a link to the registry(s) where the chip is registered.  Use it to send your contact info to the pet owner.  It does NOT give the owner info to you directly.  If it is registered in more than 1 registry, contact the oldest one first.  That is because if the pet is stolen, the culprit might re-register with new contact info.  If you do not hear from the oldest registry, contact the next newest registry, etc.

If the chip is not registered, under "Microchip distributed/manufactured by", it will often show the distributor/manufacturer of the chip.  Contact that company, as they often know which agency (e.g., a vet office) they sold that chip to.  You can then contact that agency in the hopes that they have contact info for the owner.

If the website does not have info for the above two options, it will show "Range matches".  The website tries to figure out the distributor of the chip by the chip number.  Contact that company as discussed above.

Under "Network Status", if it shows that one or more registries could not be searched, try again another time, until ALL registries can be searched.  Even if it shows one or more registries, the chip might be registered in more than one.  You want to contact all of them, as sometimes owners do not update all registries.

Registries volunteer to be included in the AAHA database and not all of them participate.  Scroll down & click on "Participating Microchipping and Pet Recovery Services" to find included registries.  I don't know of a list of registries that are NOT searched by AAHA.

## You Have Lost Your Pet

Contact the registry where you have the chip for your pet registered.  Make sure your contact info is up to date.  If you have not registered your pet, do it now.  Depending on the registry & the type of your account (free, paid) they might inform local vets, shelter, etc. about your lost pet.  They might also prepare "Lost" fliers for you & lock the registration (in case the people who find your pet try to register it themselves).  They might note when you called, which can be used if ownership is contested (in case someone finds your pet & says it's theirs).  Whether they can help you or not, you should contact all your local vets, shelters, etc. DAILY.

## Buy A Scanner

You have three options.  1) Cheap scanner that only reads 134.2 (ISO) chips.  2) Much more expensive scanner that reads all types of chips (aka "universal" scanner).  3) Moderately priced scanner that does not read all chips but does read temperature chips.

If you are a person that just wants to help when someone in your neighborhood finds a lost pet, a cheap scanner might be fine.  If you work for a vet, shelter or rescue, you might want a more expensive scanner.  If you are using chips that record your pet's temperature, get a temperature reading scanner.

Things to consider for all scanners ********
Buy one with replaceable batteries (9V, AA, etc.), as opposed to a non-replaceable battery.  When a non-replaceable battery dies, you have to buy another scanner.  Although if it's really cheap, that might be okay with you.

Scanners often turn off automatically when not in use.  Be sure is shows the last chip number read when it's turned back on (or take a picture before it turns off).  Some have the ability to download read chip number's to a computer (sometimes only to a PC) or phone via USB cable, Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.  They can save between 1 & 4000 numbers.  There are different types & sizes of screens on scanners.  Some are easier than others to read in sunlight, some show more information (2 or more lines), some tiny screens scroll the chip number (hard to read).  Consider the size of the scanner.  Consider if you want to get a scanner that reads the pet's temperature from the chip.

Things to consider for cheap scanners *********
There are a plethora of cheap scanners available.  Do a search & pick one, but be aware that the quality & durability might be poor.  Also, people writing reviews might not know what they are talking about.

Things to consider for expensive scanners *******
You'll want a "universal" scanner which means it can read all chips (except temperature).  For the temperature chips, a universal scanner can still read the chip number, but just not the temperature.  Some cheap scanners say they are "universal" but in some (most?) cases, this is false advertising.  Read the details to make sure all 3 chip frequencies (plus the one that is encrypted) can be scanned.  Sometimes the product title will include "125 kHz", but the detail description does NOT, so it probably does not.  If they don't list the frequency, make sure they can read all 3 digit lengths (9, 10, 15).

If the description says it supports "ISO11784 / ISO11785 / FDX-B / EMID", that simply means it supports the 134.2 (ISO) chip.  If that is all that is listed, it is not universal.

Companies that manufacture expensive scanners generally do not sell on Amazon, so best to do a general Internet search (rather than just an Amazon search).

The least expensive scanner I have found that actually reads all chips (except temperature) is listed in my grooming paper.  Search for "scanner".
http://curiousbunny.com/grooming_your_rabbit.pdf

Things to consider for temperature scanners *******
Be sure the scanner reads the temperature chips that you have.  If you are looking for a specific brand of scanner, be sure that brand name is in the description and on the picture of the product.  If you want to use the scanner to read other chips, note which types of chips it reads.

The least expensive scanner I have found that reads temperature chips is listed in my grooming paper (see above).

## How To Scan

Interference from nearby objects can lead to chips not receiving enough power from the scanner to send the number.  Thus it's best to scan away from these objects:  metal components in collars (remove before scanning), inside cages, metal exam tables, lighting (e.g., fluorescent) and electrical equipment (e.g., computers, TVs).

The strongest signal area will vary depending on the scanner model, but it's often outside the loop, near ten and two o'clock.

While the chip is usually between the shoulder blades, it can move over time.  Scan using S-shaped motions.  Scan many times over entire body area.  Scan slowly.  Scanner should continuously touch or be very close to the fur.

Make sure scanner does not have weak batteries, otherwise it might not activate the chip.  Change batteries frequently.  Use high quality batteries.