



**Found  
Animals™**



## **Microchip Policy Overview**

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While Found Animals has made every effort to make this summary as comprehensive as possible, only information which can be verified and substantiated has been included. Found Animals welcomes any questions, comments, information or data on any of the topics listed in this presentation. Please contact Brian Chase at [b.chase@foundanimals.org](mailto:b.chase@foundanimals.org) or (310) 574-5784 with your feedback.



# Overview

- We analyzed microchip legislation and policy to determine what best practices are
- We identified model policy based on these goals:
  - Reducing shelter euthanasia
  - Increasing return-to-owner rates for dogs and cats in shelters
  - Minimizing cost and burden to government
  - Political feasibility
  - Protecting citizens with fewer resources for whom having a pet microchipped could be burdensome

# Model Policy

- Microchip required for all cats and dogs 4 months of age or older
- Mandatory registration of microchip in approved database for all dogs, cats, pet rabbits. Includes private owners and breeders/sellers/importers.
- Exemptions:
  - Private Pet Owners: Does not apply if free or low-cost services are not available within a reasonable distance, as determined by the municipality, or if it endangers health as certified by a veterinarian.
  - Breeders/Sellers/Importers: None. (If a veterinarian declares that an animal is too young, too sick, or otherwise unable to be microchipped, that animal may not be offered for sale).
- Penalties:
  - Monetary fines and revocation of license to breed, sell or import animals

# Current Trends: Comprehensive Microchip Laws

- Sometimes/often restricted to dogs
- Often tied to licensing regulations
- Almost always applies to animals 4 months of age or older
- Certain animals (i.e., service dogs, law enforcements dogs) are sometimes exempted
- Occasionally includes pricing caps for microchip
- Sometimes required only of dangerous dogs, or of animals adopted from a shelter



# Existing Microchip Laws in Other Jurisdictions

- Currently there are no states in the U.S. that impose mandatory microchipping.
- Municipalities with mandatory microchip laws include many cities and counties in California, Texas, and Illinois:
  - California
    - Los Angeles County, Long Beach, Riverside County, City of Riverside, Oakland, Stockton, (Santa Cruz County)
  - Texas
    - El Paso, Laredo, San Antonio, Waco
  - Illinois
    - Kankakee County

# Previous CA Microchip Bill

- In 2011, Senator Ted Lieu sponsored a bill (CA Senate Bill 702) requiring mandatory microchipping of cats and dogs.
  - Required shelters, rescue groups, humane societies, and SPCA shelters to microchip all dogs and cats given to a new owner or returned to an existing owner.
  - Exceptions to the requirement:
    - If a shelter does not have microchipping on site, animal may be released as long as the new owner provides proof within 30 days that the animal has been microchipped.
- Bill passed but was vetoed by Governor Brown.
  - Governor Brown agreed that microchipping was a good practice, but did not think the state should be responsible for the costs.



# Los Angeles County, California

- Dogs over the age of 4 months must be microchipped.
- No exceptions.
- No specific penalties identified.
- Evidence supporting the need for this law was provided by LADACC Director Marcia Mayeda at the Board of Supervisors meeting to pass this ordinance
  - Lack of identification is the number one reason that an animal is not reunited with its owner when brought to the shelter. Microchips would help solve that problem and reduce euthanasia rates
  - Will help shelters to identify whether or not a female dog has been spayed, since this is not always obvious
  - Ensure that a dog cannot be fraudulently presented as a different dog



# Long Beach, California

- Dogs over the age of 4 months must be microchipped.
- No exceptions.
- No specific penalties identified.



# Riverside County, California

- All dogs and cats over the age of 4 months must be microchipped.
- Exceptions :
  - Not required for an animal that has a high likelihood of suffering or serious bodily injury due to implantation of the microchip
  - Not required for an animal that would be impaired of its athletic ability or performance if implanted with the microchip identification
  - Not required for an animal that is kenneled in Riverside County but owned by an individual who resides outside of Riverside County
- No penalties specified.
- Price of chip set by statute (\$20/\$10 for co. shelters)



# Riverside, California

- All dogs and cats over 4 months of age must be microchipped.
- Exceptions to the requirement:
  - Not required for an animal that has a high likelihood of suffering or serious bodily injury due to implantation of the microchip
  - Not required for an animal that is kenneled in Riverside but owned by an individual who resides outside of Riverside
  - Not required for a dog or cat over the age of ten (10) years.
- No specific penalties identified.



# Oakland, California

- A microchip is a requirement for a mandatory pet license for dogs over the age of 4 months.
- No *microchip* exceptions specified.
  - Law identifies exceptions to paying the *license* fee for those who cannot afford to pay.
  - Seeing eye dogs are not subject to *license fee* requirements.
- No penalties identified for failure to microchip.



# Stockton, California

- All dogs and cats over 6 months of age must be licensed. A microchip is a requirement for a dog or cat to obtain a license.
- No *microchip* exceptions specified.
  - Owners of service dogs do not have to pay the *license* fee. No mention of whether or not this applies to microchips.
- No penalties identified.



# Santa Cruz County, California

- In February 2014, Santa Cruz County board voted to require dogs and cats over the age of 4 months to be microchipped.
- As of May 2014, it has yet to be codified in the Santa Cruz County Code.



# El Paso, Texas

- Microchip required for dogs, cats, and ferrets older than 4 months.
- Change of ownership must be reported within 7 days.
- No penalties specified.
- No *microchip* exceptions specified.
  - License* fee exemption for:
    - law enforcement/government agency dogs
    - Service animals
    - Animals other than dogs, cats, or ferrets vaccinated for rabies

# Laredo, Texas

- Microchips required for dogs and cats over 6 months of age.
- No *microchip* exceptions specified.
  - Law identifies exceptions to paying the *license* fee for:
    - Handicapped persons who utilize the dog as a service dog
    - Law enforcement dogs
- No penalties specified.



# San Antonio, Texas

- San Antonio required mandatory microchips for all cats, dogs and ferrets age 4 months and older, as part of its licensing procedure, beginning in 2008.
- Pet owners could pay \$5 for a license tag if they did not wish to have their pet microchipped
- No penalties specified.
- In 2010, the law was repealed and microchipping is no longer mandatory.



# Waco, Texas

- Microchips required for dogs and cats over 4 months of age.
- Exception only for community cats with ears tipped.
- No penalties specified.



# Kankakee County, Illinois

- Microchips required for dogs and cats by 9 months of age.
- No exceptions mentioned.
- No penalties specified.



# International Jurisdictions with Microchip Laws:

## Australia

- New South Wales
- Tasmania (dogs only)
- Victoria (dogs only)
- Queensland
  - Compulsory registration (licensing)
  - Compulsory microchipping
    - Applies to all new cats and dogs
    - Applies to all cats and dogs at point of sale or transfer
    - Cats and dogs over 12 weeks old who remain with their owners are exempted
  - Compulsory ear tattooing for all sterilized cats and dogs
    - Reduced licensing fees for sterilized animals
    - Animals sterilized prior to July 2009 are exempted
    - Sterilization is not required except for dangerous dogs



# Countries with compulsory microchipping laws for dogs

- France
- Denmark
- Slovenia
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- Spain
- Portugal
- Canada
- Hong Kong
- Israel
- Japan
- Prague
- Northern Ireland
- England (will not come into force until April 2016)
- New Zealand



# Arguments in favor:

- Increases likelihood that lost pet will be reunited with owner
  - For cats, likelihood of return to owner is exponentially higher
- Helps establish ownership in cases of cruelty, contested pet ownership, etc.
- Has certain advantages over other forms of pet identification:
  - Tattoos may fade, or not show up on pets with dark fur
  - Tags can fall off or become illegible with wear and tear



# Arguments against:

- Errors in scanning can leave microchip undetected
- Not all shelters have scanners; not all scanners read all frequencies
- Microchip registrations (owner's contact information) are often not kept current
- Costly
- Could penalize feral cat caretakers
- Risk of injury to pet in microchip insertion



# Common Themes

- Often part of the licensing and registration requirements.
- Exemptions are not usually specified.
  - License fee* exemptions are often specified, however.
- Penalties for failure to comply are not specified.
- Common age for the requirement is 4 months.



# Key Differences

- Riverside City and County are the only jurisdictions that exempt animals on account of age/health of the animal.
- Riverside County is the only statute that caps a cost for microchips.
- El Paso has a strict timeline on updating contact information for microchips (7 days after ownership transfer).

# Microchip usage data:

## **OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY MICROCHIP STUDY:**

- Data collected in 2007-08 from 53 shelters in 23 states, covering 7,700 animals
- Return-to-owner rates were 20% higher for chipped cats, 2.5% higher for chipped dogs
- Collars with tags were more effective than microchips
- 2.5% of chips were detected just prior to euthanasia; only 87% were detected upon intake
- 12% of microchips would be missed without multiple scans
- Owners were found for 73% of microchipped pets
- 10% of microchips were unregistered

<http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/shelterchip.htm>

Ohio State professor Linda Lord coauthored this study with Vetmedica pharmaceutical company employee Walter Ingwersen, private veterinarian Janet Gray, and a Latimer Humane Society employee David Wintz.



# Positions on microchip:

## **ASPCA :**

- Supports North American transfer to ISO standard for microchips
- Supports mandatory microchipping for regulation of dangerous dogs

## **HSUS:**

- Recommends microchipping as a backup form of identification (promotes collar and tag as primary form of identification)

## **Animal Legal Defense Fund:**

- Supports comprehensive microchipping as a vital tool in reuniting lost pets with their owners, and assisting law enforcement in animal abuse investigations

## **Found Animals is neutral because:**

- As a private operating foundation it cannot endorse legislation or issue a call to action
- However, Found Animals endorses comprehensive microchipping as a community action because of its effectiveness in reducing shelter euthanasia

## **AKC opposes because:**

- Believes owner, not government, should make decisions regarding pet identification



# Summary

- There are no states with a mandatory microchip law. Laws are found at the municipal level.
- There are a number of international countries that have compulsory microchipping laws.
- A previous CA bill was vetoed by the Governor due to cost.
- Existing laws do not appear to have strong enforcement mechanisms.
- It is uncommon to list exemptions to the microchip requirement.
  - License fee exemptions are common.

