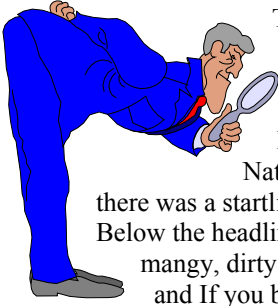


Do You Know Where Your Airedale Is?

By Joyce Miller



This year, there will be a microchip clinic at the LSATC Fourth Annual Airedale Versatility Day in Hutto. Should you microchip your dog and register him or her in a national registry? Many club members believe you should.

In the year 2000 Montgomery catalog (the dog show catalog of the Airedale National Specialty in Pennsylvania), among the ads for all the beautiful show dogs, there was a startling ad titled "Do You Know Where Your Puppies Are? We Thought We Did." Below the headline, instead of a picture of a beautiful groomed Airedale, there was a picture of a mangy, dirty looking Airedale with two lines of copy: "There's no such thing as too careful" and "If you breed, please help with rescue." The ad was placed by Debbie Hempstead of Tekoah Airedales in Williamsburg Virginia.

Debb had found one of her puppies in a shelter in terrible condition. The story had a very happy ending: she took the dog home, took care of its problems, and placed it in a wonderful forever home. And from then on, Debb started microchipping every puppy before it goes to its new home and keeping the microchip registration in her name. This ensures that any dog from her breedings will be returned to her if it is lost and found. This also encourages the owners of a puppy to keep a breeder informed of future moves, if for no other reason than to make sure that if their dog is lost, found and returned to the breeder, the breeder can find them.

I never forgot that ad or the story behind that ad. We were already microchipping our own dogs and recommending that puppy people do the same, but after that story, we started microchipping every puppy at eight weeks and keeping the microchip registration in our name. Several other LSATC breeders are doing the same, and the North Texas Airedale Rescue team microchips every Airedale that they place in a new home.

Why should you microchip your dog? Shelters, rescue organizations, and good samaritans receive hundreds, probably thousands, of lost dogs, cats and other animals every month. If the animal has a microchip, they can instantly track down the owner through a pet registry (as long as that chip was registered by the owner) and reunite them quickly.

How big is a microchip? The microchip is about the size and shape of a grain of rice. It is injected with a 12-gauge needle under the skin of the dog, usually in the neck area. Once in place, neither you nor your pet will be able to feel or notice it.

How does a chip work? The chip works like an antenna, and when scanned with a scanner made for the purpose, the scanner detects a radio wave that shows up on the scanner as the dog's unique registration number. Those numbers are registered with a registry. Since it doesn't have an internal battery or power source, most of the time the chip is inactive. When the microchip reader is passed over it, it gets enough power from the reader to transmit the pet's ID number. Since there's no battery and no moving parts, there's nothing to wear out or replace. The microchip should last throughout your pet's lifetime.

Is microchipping expensive? While the price can vary from one veterinarian to another, it often falls between \$25 and \$40. A lot of veterinarians will charge even less if they perform the implantation at the same time as another procedure, like spaying, neutering, or dental work. It's a one-time fee; the chip never needs maintenance or replacement. There may be a fee, generally under \$20, to enter your pet's ID number in a database, and there may be a small fee for changing your address, phone number, or other contact information in the database. Still, microchip identification is cheaper than making flyers, calling around town, and taking time off work to find a lost pet.

Will it hurt my dog? The procedure is simple, routine, and painless, and it doesn't require any anesthesia. Your pet simply gets an injection just under the loose skin between the shoulder blades; it's a lot like getting vaccinated. Veterinarians have been implanting microchips in animals for years, and the process has

been proven to be very safe. The chip is made out of an inert, biocompatible substance, which means it won't cause an allergic reaction in your furry friend, and it won't degenerate over time.

Tips for microchipping: Make sure the chip is scanned before it is implanted in your Airedale. Make sure the dog is scanned immediately after implantation to make sure it is working. When you visit your veterinarian, ASK that the chip be scanned to make sure it is working and has not migrated. If you have your Airedale at a dog show or event that features microchipping, ask to have your dog scanned to provide yet another check of the chip.

Today, more than a million pets are registered with either the American Kennel Club's Companion Animal Recovery system (which uses the HomeAgain system) or American Veterinary Identification Devices. And more than 150,000 lost pets have been reunited with their owners through these systems.

The microchip has the advantage of permanence; collar and tags can be lost or removed. In a perfect world, leashes, fences, and doors would be enough to keep your pet safe at home. In the real world, accidents happen, and your pet depends on you to protect her against the things that could go wrong. With a little effort now, you can take a big step toward ensuring that your furry friend will be with you in the future.

Microchipping Works: One rainy night in December, 2002, I learned first hand how valuable the microchip and our decision to hold the registration is. It was dark, cold, and the rain was pelting down. The phone rang, and a very pleasant woman identified herself as calling from Companion Animal Recover (CAR) and told me that my dog was safe. This was a dog who lives in another home. I didn't know she was missing. The woman gave me the name and telephone number of the person who had found her, and I called him. He had seen her yellow tag with the CAR 800 number and her unique ID number on it, and he had called the CAR. They told him her name so that he could call her by name. I asked his address and called her owners. They were out looking for her, so I caught up with them on one of their cell phones. Within an hour of her disappearance, they had her back, safe and sound.

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