



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Microchipping of Dogs**

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BY **Alun Davies, Minister for Natural Resources Wales**

Following our recent consultation on compulsory microchipping of all dogs, I am pleased to announce that Wales will be making regulations to ensure that all dogs are microchipped by March 2015, creating a proper link between a dog and its owner and helping to encourage responsible dog ownership. In addition, in order to tackle irresponsible ownership, I will also be introducing Regulations on licensed dog breeding later this year.

The results of last year's consultation on microchipping are available on the Welsh Government website, and the majority of respondents make it clear that compulsory microchipping of dogs should be introduced in Wales.

Whilst dog owners already have a duty of care under the Animal Welfare Act, it is increasingly important to be able to have a method of tracing a pet dog to its owner. Without this it can be very difficult to ensure that duty is being met. Microchipping formalises the relationship between an owner and pet by promoting the owner's level of accountability for his or her animal's welfare needs.

I have therefore decided to proceed with the making of Regulations that will require all dogs in Wales to be microchipped by 1 March 2015.

Identification and registration of dogs can be achieved by a veterinary surgeon, veterinary nurse or qualified microchipper inserting a transponder or microchip under the animal's skin. Each microchip has a unique number which can be read by an external reader and the number on the microchip is normally registered with a commercial database, which can then be accessed by an appropriate authority.

Microchipping will assist in reuniting owners with dogs that have strayed and will help to reduce the stress for both the dog and owner alike. It will also reduce the time a dog will spend in animal welfare establishments or Local Authority kennels leading to substantial savings for local authorities and welfare charities. In 2010/11 over 126,000 stray dogs were collected by UK Local Authorities. Of these, over half (52%) could not be returned to their owners because they were unidentifiable. For the financial year ending April 2012, 10,230 stray dogs were collected by Welsh Local Authorities. 543 dogs were put down and

many others had a lengthy stay in kennels, away from their owner or family.

Identification of animals is also an essential tool in effective disease control. For dogs, as with other animals, it could also be helpful in tracing inherited conditions. At present, for example, it is often difficult to trace the history of a litter of puppies especially if they have been sold via animal dealers and pet shops. Efforts are being made to tackle these health problems, but reporting hereditary health problems and measuring progress would be much easier if all dogs were uniquely identified with a microchip.

Of the estimated 450,000 dogs on Wales, it is estimated that some 58% are already microchipped. This means that there are approximately 190,000 dogs that would need to be microchipped. If the animals are microchipped at veterinary practices, there are added advantages of a veterinary surgeon running a health screening check at the same time.

We estimate that it is possible to have all those animals microchipped within a year of Regulations coming into effect. The Regulations will allow dog owners 12 months in which to get their dog micro-chipped.

I am pleased also to announce that the Dogs Trust are able to offer a free service of microchipping until the regulations come into force. Access to those arrangements can already be made by dog owners directing their enquiries to the Dogs Trust at www.dogstrust.org.uk