

Dog Microchipping Fact Sheet

Changes to Domestic Animal Law

Recent amendments to the *ACT Domestic Animal Act 2000* mean that compulsory identification of a dog by microchipping is being introduced into the ACT.

From 1 May 2008 dogs that have been sold or are a declared dangerous dog, must be identified by microchip.

Microchipping will be compulsory for all dogs (over 12 weeks of age) by 1 May 2011 after a three year phase-in period.

The approved identifying microchip is specified by law (Notifiable Instrument NI2008-147) <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-147/current/pdf/2008-147.pdf>.

The implanting of microchips and the operation of domestic animal registry services for identification purposes are governed by Codes of Practice (Disallowable Instrument DI2008-73 and Disallowable Instrument DI2008-72) <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2008-73/current/pdf/2008-73.pdf> and <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2008-72/current/pdf/2008-72.pdf>.

Why such laws?

Large numbers of owned dogs are destroyed each year simply because they lack identification. Identification enables owned dogs to be distinguished from un-owned dogs and provides a link between a dog and its owner.

Microchipping provides permanent lifetime identification, ensuring that your dog has a much higher chance of being returned to you if it gets lost and ends up in an animal shelter or injured and at a vet clinic.

What is an identifying Microchip

A microchip is a tiny silicon chip (approximately the size of a small grain of rice) that is implanted under the skin of your pet. The microchip contains a unique identification number which identifies the dog's owner through a microchip registry. Once in place, the microchip cannot be lost, removed or altered for the life of your dog. It is a relatively inexpensive, once-off procedure that is not painful and causes no harm – it is just like an ordinary vaccination.

All dogs taken to animal shelters and vets are scanned for the presence of a microchip. When one is found, a call to the microchip registry enables the owner to be identified, ensuring a quick reunion.

For more information see Notifiable Instrument NI2008-147.

<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-147/current/pdf/2008-147.pdf>

At what age must dogs be microchipped?

Dogs must be microchipped if they have been sold and they are at least 12 weeks of age.

However, a dog is not required to be microchipped if it is less than 6 months old and a vet has certified in writing, before the dog was 12 weeks old, that microchipping would be a serious health risk to the animal.

What if I own an older dog? Do I still have to get it microchipped?

If your dog is a declared dangerous dog, or you have purchased it since 1 May 2008, it must be microchipped. However, if you have acquired your dog before 1 May 2008 you have until 1 May 2011 to have the dog microchipped.

Has compulsory microchipping of declared dangerous dogs been introduced?

Yes, from 1 May 2008 declared dangerous dogs must be microchipped. The Registrar of Domestic Animal Services may declare a dog to be dangerous in three ways:

- (1) a dog has been trained as a guard dog or is kept as a guard dog on other than residential premises; or
- (2) a decision has been made under equivalent state or territory law to declare a dog to be dangerous; or
- (3) it has attacked or harassed a person or animal.

Who is allowed to implant a microchip in a dog?

Qualified veterinarians are authorized to implant microchips in a dog.

How much does it cost?

Your vet will be able to advise you of the cost of implanting a microchip in your dog.

What information is on the microchip?

Microchips carry a unique identification number. This number relates to your ownership details. When this number is accessed on a microchip registry it provides the contact details of the owner and details of the dog. Details include: owner's name, address(es) and telephone number(s); and may include breed, date of birth of the dog, colour, sex, whether or not it is a declared dangerous dog and its breeding status.

Where are my details stored?

Your details are stored on a computer database maintained by a microchip registry.

The vet implanting the identifying microchip must provide the identifying information to a licensed microchip registry within 2 working days.

Microchip registry services are provided by licensed private operators who are required to operate according to established Codes of Practice. See <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2008-72/current/pdf/2008-72.pdf>.

It is the responsibility of dog owners to ensure that their details are up-to-date on the microchip registry. For example, changes of address and telephone numbers should be reported to the registry as soon as possible.

Who will have access to my information?

The Code of Practice for the Operation of Domestic Animal Registry Services, places restrictions on the provision of identifying information. Identifying information can only be provided to the owner of the animal and to authorised persons. Authorised persons include veterinarians and government officers employed by ACT Domestic Animal Services.

<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2008-72/current/pdf/2008-72.pdf>

If my dog already has a microchip from another State or Territory, will I need to have this replaced?

No, provided that the microchip in your dog is able to be read by the standard microchip readers used in the ACT. It is important that you contact the microchip registry for your dogs microchip to update the contact details of the owner. If you do not know which registry or database stores the microchip information, contact Domestic Animal Services (DAS) or your local vet to check the details for you.

My dog is registered, so why do I also need to have it microchipped?

Microchipping is a form of permanent identification which means a dog's owner can be identified and arrangements made for the dog to be returned to its owner if lost, but it does not constitute lifetime registration. Therefore you are still required by law to register your dog.

Registration assists the ACT Government in maintaining records and providing dog management services under the *ACT Domestic Animals Act 2000*. These services provided for dogs are of a different kind and scope to those provided for cats. Cats are not required to be registered in the ACT.

My dog had puppies and I want to sell them or give them away. What must I do?

Dog identification by microchip is compulsory if the dog is at least 12 weeks old and it has been sold.

If you are giving away a puppy (that is less than 12 weeks of age) you should advise the new owner of the recommendation to have the dog microchipped after it is 12 weeks old. After this age, the sooner your dog is identified by microchip, the better.

Microchipping will be compulsory for all dogs (over the age of 12 weeks) by 1 May 2011 after a 3 year phase-in period.

If you wish to allow your dog to remain un-desexed for breeding purposes, it is compulsory that you obtain a permit to keep a sexually entire animal (SEA). The cost of an SEA permit at 1 May 2008, is given at <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2008-156/current/pdf/2008-156.pdf>.

Discounted fees apply to holders of a pension, seniors or concession card and to members of the *ACT Canine Association Incorporated* or the *Canberra Greyhound Racing Club Incorporated*.

Fees are reviewed annually and changes are published as a Disallowable Instrument under the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*.

Penalties apply for the keeping of a sexually entire dog without the appropriate permit.

What if my microchipped dog dies, or I sell or give it away?

You should contact the microchip registry to advise them of your dog's death or the changed ownership. A new owner of a microchipped dog should provide their ownership details to the microchip registry.

What if I don't get my dog microchipped?

From 1 May 2008 dogs that are at least 12 weeks old, have been sold, or are a dangerous dog, must be identified by microchip.

Microchipping will be compulsory for all dogs (over 12 weeks of age) by 1 May 2011 after a three year phase-in period.

Failure to have your dog microchipped may result in you being liable to an infringement notice or a fine if you do not comply.

Remember, microchipping is intended to benefit both you and your dog by providing a means to identify your dog and link it with your contact details.