Remember, with any form of identification, it is imperative to keep information up to date!

Common types of pet identification for your dog and cat

* Engraved ID tags attach to your pet’s collar; shows your pet’s name and your contact information; inexpensive and highly visible; engraving may wear off over time
* Digital ID tags can be scanned by a smartphone to open your online profile; tag may include profile website, pet name and/or your phone number; requires subscription (free and paid options usually available)
* Personalized collars are embroidered with your pet’s name and your phone number
* Microchips contain an electromagnetic transponder with a code that’s registered with a pet-recovery program and links to your contact information; injected under your pet’s skin between the shoulder blades while pet is under local or general anesthesia; must be read by a special scanner at an animal shelter or veterinary office
* Tattoos are inked on your pet’s inner ear flap, stomach or inner leg; feature a code, phone number or other information; require local or general anesthesia; may fade over time

ID Tags
Collars, tags, and chips are our pets first defense. They are easy to see and tell others that our pet has a home, whether by chip or Choosing strong materials is key. It means the tag stays on, even if pets play rough or get wet. The ID tag should include the owner’s name, address, telephone numbers (day and evening) and the pet’s name. For cats, use a specially made safety collar, often called a break-away collar, that has a short piece of elastic sewn in it. These collars allow the cat to escape if it gets caught on window blinds, furniture, fencing or other objects. Cats can wear tags even if you never let him outside. He could slip through an open door and quickly become lost in the neighborhood.

Wearable Tech

Beyond normal collars and dog tags, there are gadgets for keeping tabs on pets, including various types of dog ID tags. Finding ones that aren't too heavy means pets stay comfy while wearing them. GPS tracking collars and smart tags are becoming increasingly popular, offering real-time location tracking and additional features like activity monitoring. These devices can be a great complement to traditional IDs, providing an added layer of security. Smart tags work by sending alerts to your phone if your pet leaves a designated area. Some even allow for two-way communication, enabling you to call out to your pet through the tag. GPS collars, on the other hand, offer live tracking, which can be invaluable in locating a lost pet quickly. These high-tech options are especially useful for pets that spend a lot of time outdoors or have a tendency to roam.

Microchips

Microchipping serves as a permanent identification system that will always be with your pet. Nearly all animal shelters across the country routinely scan every animal upon intake for the presence of a microchip. Most veterinary clinics also have microchip scanners.

**What is a microchip?** A microchip is a small, electronic chip enclosed in a glass cylinder that is about the same size as a grain of rice. The microchip itself does not have a battery—it is activated by a scanner that is passed over the area, and the radio waves put out by the scanner activate the chip. The chip transmits the identification number to the scanner, which displays the number on the screen. The microchip itself is also called a transponder.

**How do microchips work?** Each chip contains a unique ID number that can be read by a microchip scanner and matched with owner information in a comprehensive database. A microchip is effective in reuniting a lost pet with his owner *only when the owner’s contact information in the microchip database is accurate*. Therefore, it is imperative that you immediately register your pet’s microchip with the appropriate database, and always update your contact information promptly when you move or get a new phone number.

**How is a microchip implanted into an animal? Is it painful? Does it require surgery or anesthesia?** It is injected under the skin using a hypodermic needle. It is no more painful than a typical injection, although the needle is slightly larger than those used for injection. No surgery or anesthesia is required—a microchip can be implanted during a routine veterinary office visit. If your pet is already undergoing anesthesia for a procedure, such as neutering or spaying, the microchip often can be implanted while they're still under anesthesia.

**What kind of information is contained in the microchip? Is there a tracking device in it? Will it store my pet's medical information?** The microchips presently used in pets only contain identification numbers. The microchip is not a GPS device and cannot track your animal if it gets lost. Although the microchip itself does not contain your pet's medical information, some microchip registration databases will allow you to store that information in the database for quick reference.

**Should I be concerned about my privacy if my pet is microchipped? Will someone be able to track me down?** No. You don't need to be concerned about your privacy. The information you provide to the manufacturer's microchip registry will be used to contact you in the event your pet is found and its microchip is scanned. In most cases, you can choose to opt in or opt out of other communications (such as newsletters or advertisements) from the manufacturer. The only information about you in the database is the information that you choose to provide when you register the chip or update your information. There are protections in place so that a random person can't just look up an owner's identification.

**How does a microchip help reunite a lost animal with its owner?** When an animal is found and taken to a shelter or veterinary clinic, one of the first things the staff does is scan the animal for a microchip. If they find a microchip, and if the microchip registry has accurate information, they can quickly find the animal's owner.

**Will a microchip really make it more likely for me to get my pet back if it is lost?** Definitely! In fact, a study of more than 7,700 stray animals at animal shelters in 23 states showed that microchipped animals are far more likely to be returned to their owners. In that study, microchipped stray dogs were returned to their owners at more than double the overall rate for all stray dogs. For stray cats, the difference in return rates was even more dramatic. For microchipped animals that weren't returned to their owners, the most common reason was an incorrect or disconnected owner telephone number in the microchip registry database. So don't forget to register your pet’s microchip, and keep your contact information up to date.

**Does a microchip replace identification tags and rabies tags?** Absolutely not. Microchips are great for permanent identification that is tamper-proof, but nothing replaces a collar with up-to-date identification tags. If a pet is wearing a collar with tags when it's lost, it's often a very quick process to read the tag and contact the owner—if the information on the tag is accurate. But if a pet is not wearing a collar and tags, or if the collar is lost or removed, then the presence of a microchip might be the only way the pet's owner can be found. Your pet's rabies tag should always be on its collar, so people can quickly see that your pet has been vaccinated for this deadly disease. Rabies tag numbers also allow tracing of animals and identification of a lost animal's owner, but it can be hard to have a rabies number traced after veterinary clinics or county offices are closed for the day. The microchip databases are online or accessed by telephone, and are available 24/7/365.

**I want to get my animal(s) microchipped. Where do I go?** To your veterinarian, of course! Most veterinary clinics keep microchips on hand. So, it's likely that your pet can be implanted with a microchip the same day as your appointment. Sometimes local shelters or businesses will host a microchipping event, too.

**What should I do to "maintain" my pet's microchip?** Once your pet is microchipped, there are only three things you need to do:

Make sure the microchip is registered. Ask your veterinarian to scan your pet's microchip at least once a year to make sure the microchip is still functioning and can be detected. Keep your registration information up-to-date. If you've moved, or if any of your information (especially your phone number or address) has changed, make sure you update your microchip registration in the manufacturer's database as soon as possible. August 15 is designated as Check the Chip Day each year, and that’s the perfect time to take a few minutes to check your pet’s microchip registration information and update it if necessary.