**Why Microchip Your Cat?**

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**Should Kittens Get Microchip IDs?**

By Jackie Kelly

It used to be that unless you had an identification tag on your cat your chances of finding the cat if he or she went missing were slim to none. With modern technology, however, that’s changing. Although some people may be opposed to microchipping their cats because of religious or moral reasons, having your cat microchipped will help animal shelters and animal control officers reunite you with your cat if ever he or she becomes lost.

**What is a Microchip?**

Before you decide to microchip your cat or kitten, you should have a full understanding of [what a microchip is and what it isn’t](http://www.chipyourcat.com/faqs.html" \t "_blank). A microchip identification tag is a small computer chip containing information linking you to your cat. The chip is inserted subcutaneously (under the skin) with a needle, a procedure which takes only a few minutes. It is common practice to insert the chip, which is non-toxic and about the size of a grain of rice, between your cat’s shoulder blades. It will not cause your cat discomfort or allergic reactions.

Because the chip is skin deep you may be able to feel it occasionally, depending on the size and weight of your cat. Additionally, the chip can migrate with age, though because it is only skin deep it will not migrate into any vital organs. Animal shelters and veterinarians are aware that chips can migrate and as a result will scan a lost cat or dog’s entire body to check for a microchip.

**When is My Kitten Old Enough for a Microchip?**

KIttens may be equipped with a microchip as young as five weeks old, though the size and age of the animal being microchipped (in this case a cat) is not what determines the appropriate time to insert the microchip. Rather, it is the health and stability of your kitten. Although the insertion of the microchip is noninvasive and does not require anesthesia, kittens younger than five weeks old are still very fragile and most likely still nursing. In most shelters it's standard practice to wait until the kitten is eight weeks old (or about two pounds) to insert the microchip.

**Does the Microchip Use GPS?**

It is important to know that a microchip is not a Global Positioning System (GPS) or tracking device. You will not be able to use the microchip to trace your cat if he or she goes missing. Additionally, in order for the microchip to be effective you should make sure your information (phone number, home address, and emergency contact) is up to date.

**What are the Benefits of a Microchip?**

The main benefit of having a microchip is pretty straight forward — when paired with the right contact information and a microchip, you can be reunited with your cat if she should get lost. And since most microchip companies serve as an intermediary during the reuniting process, your home address and phone number is more secure than if it was placed on a regular ID tag. (Note: If preferable, microchip companies also give you the option of allowing the finder of your lost cat to call you directly.) You can also update your contact information with the microchip company as frequently as you’d like by simply making a phone call or sending an e-mail. In fact, it is recommended that change your contact information every time you change your phone number or address.

Most of us don’t want to think of the worst case scenario until it happens. Often we can’t fathom the idea of our cats escaping [(even indoor cats!)](http://www.pet360.com/cat/lifestyle/guide-to-finding-a-lost-cat/tck2ni8nXk63IVCHtVth8Q" \t "_blank), but there are plenty of reasons it occurs. Whether your cat runs away from the cat sitter, escapes during a party, or bolts after hearing a slew of fireworks, having your cat microchipped can be a lifesaver.