



COMPANION

ANIMAL HOSPITAL, SPRINGFIELD VA
Companions for life

Pet Identification

Proper identification of pets can save animals' lives, keep them out of shelters, and reunite them quickly with their worried owners. It is an important part of responsible pet ownership. **The following scenarios are common:**

- Your pet slips out the door when it is opened.
- The gate in your backyard is left open and your dog takes off.
- Someone picks up your pet, thinking it is unattended.
- You and your pet get separated while on vacation.
- Your pet gets frightened during a storm and escapes from home.

Your fear grows as you imagine what could happen to your missing pet. Knowing that your pet can be identified and ownership traced to you may give you added hope of your pet's safe return.

We recommend the following forms of pet identification:

1. **Identification Tags:** We strongly recommend that all dogs and cats wear collars and ID tags. In addition to a tag with your contact information, dogs should wear their rabies tag and their county license on their collar. Both of these are required by law. Rabies tags have the contact info of the administering veterinarian, and a number that can be easily traced back to the owner. County dog tags can also be easily traced back to the owner. The obvious disadvantage is that animals and tags can become separated. If in place, however, they are the most expedient way of locating the owner of a found pet.

To learn more about dog licensing requirements in Fairfax County, see additional information in this packet or ask the veterinarian or receptionist during your appointment.

2. **Microchips:** This is the newest form of pet identification available. A tiny chip is implanted under the skin by injection and its code can be read by scanners at shelters and veterinary practices. It is standard procedure at most animal shelters to scan each incoming stray animal for a microchip. The chip is linked to a national registry. (We provide AKC Companion

Animal Recovery). The scanner is able to provide a unique ID number that indicates the brand of the microchip and the identity of the owner. **The owner must register the microchip with the registry and provide current contact information so that the owner can be traced.**

Remember to update your information when you move, or if the animal changes owners. If the contact information is not correct, it will be impossible for the registry to contact you should your animal become lost.

3. **Tattoo:** This is a semi-permanent form of identification. A tattoo is placed on the inside of the right thigh. Most tattoos are the owner's social security number, but variations are allowed. The tattoos are registered with a national registry. Tattoos may fade with time and are sometimes difficult to read, but they can be "refreshed" from time to time as needed.
- **Consider using multiple forms of identification. Most owners find the microchip in addition to the collar and tag identification to be most useful.**