



VETERINARY PRACTICE BOARD WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Guidelines on the Microchipping of Dogs and Cats

PREAMBLE

The *Dog Act 1976* (Dog Act) and the *Cat Act 2011* (Cat Act) require that all dogs over 3 months and cats over 6 months of age must have a microchip implanted but this does not preclude the implanting of a microchip in younger dogs and cats.

For compliance purposes under the Dog Act and Cat Act a veterinarian may be requested to:

- implant a microchip in a dog or cat; or
- provide an Exemption Certificate if the veterinarian believes microchipping will adversely affect the health and welfare of the dog or cat; or
- check if a dog or cat is microchipped and, if required, implant a microchip to enable ownership of the dog or cat to be transferred.

For further information on microchipping under the Dog Act and Cat Act refer to <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/community/cats-and-dogs>

APPLICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines apply from and including 14 February 2023.

These Guidelines may be superseded by subsequent versions. To ascertain whether this version has been superseded, view the current version on the Veterinary Practice Board (Board)'s website at www.vpbwa.org.au.

It is the responsibility of veterinarians who insert microchips into cats and dogs to be conversant with the current version of this policy. Any certificate must be accurate and a veterinarian must ensure that the issuance of such a certificate is justifiable. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in disciplinary action by the Board.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this guideline the Board applies the following definitions

Owner of a dog or cat is the person who is recorded in the local government register as the registered owner of the animal. If the animal is not registered with the local government, then the owner is the person who is recorded as the owner on the microchip database.

Microchip implanter is a prescribed person or a person holding the prescribed qualifications of a microchip implanter and includes a registered veterinarian or veterinary nurse. Microchip implanters may only insert microchips in dogs and cats. Microchipping in all other species must be performed by a veterinarian or veterinary nurse.

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OWNERSHIP ISSUES

In carrying out any of the above tasks, a veterinarian should routinely perform a microchip scan. If a microchip is detected and the presenting “owner” is not the person whose name is recorded as the owner of the dog or cat in the relevant microchip database, or they are unable to produce a local government registration certificate, the veterinarian should postpone or refuse to carry out the requested task until the issue of the ownership of the dog or cat can be established. Given that the implanting of microchips or the provision of an Exemption Certificate cannot be regarded as an emergency situation, any delay associated with this action is unlikely to put the health or safety of the dog or cat at risk.

NOTE: The onus for establishing ownership of the animal rests with the owner and not the veterinarian. For the purposes of this guideline, the provision of a local government registration certificate is sufficient proof of ownership.

OBLIGATION TO PERFORM MICROCHIP SCANS

The Board considers it too onerous a burden on veterinarians to require them to routinely perform microchip scans on dogs and cats to confirm ownership before providing any veterinary services on these animals.

However, if a veterinarian has reason to believe, or suspect, a person requesting the veterinary services may not be the owner of the animal, it is appropriate in these circumstances for the veterinarian to perform a microchip scan to confirm ownership and to refuse to provide the requested services if ownership cannot be established.

NOTE: In an emergency situation a veterinarian is justified in performing a lifesaving procedure on a dog or cat without conclusively establishing the ownership of the animal.

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

A veterinarian should only provide an Exemption Certificate if the veterinary surgeon believes microchipping will adversely affect the health and welfare of the dog or cat. The decision as to whether microchipping will have adverse effects relies on a veterinarian’s professional judgement. In some instances there will be considerable pressure from the owner for an Exemption Certificate to be issued.

In most circumstances the following arguments or those of a similar nature by owners, would **NOT** be sufficient grounds for the issuing of an Exemption Certificate:

- never leaves the house;
- doesn’t like going to the veterinarian; or
- is too old to be microchipped.

DISCLAIMER

These Guidelines (printed, electronic or any other medium) do not constitute legal advice.

Readers are encouraged to seek their own professional advice to determine their obligations under the Act, subsidiary legislation made under the Act and other applicable laws. It is the responsibility of those persons regulated by the Act to determine their obligations. The authors, the Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia (Board), the members of the Board and the staff of the Board accept no liability for losses caused by reliance on any of the material in these Guidelines.