Microchipping Your Pets

Traditional forms of pet identification have been joined by high-tech microchips to provide beneficial and feasible ways to identify your pet.

Microchips are tiny transmitters that can be implanted in pets. They are the size of a grain of rice and serve as permanent identification.

When read by a scanner, an identification number is transmitted by the microchip. The pet owner's information can be looked up using the identification number, states Chris Gensler, DVM of Tyranena Veterinary Clinic, Lake Mills, Wis.

"The microchip is a permanent identification in case a pet is lost or stolen. Collars and tags can easily come off or be removed, where as a microchip cannot," Dr. Gensler says.

"The microchip, when scanned, only contains an identification number linked to an account. The microchip company handles all the contacting so personal information is secure," Dr. Gensler continues.

Pet owners should have microchips inserted by a licensed veterinary professional during a veterinary visit, says Dr. Gensler. The procedure is no more painful than a typical injection, although a slightly larger needle is used for insertion.

"A microchip is implanted using a large needle beneath the skin between the shoulder blades," Dr. Gensler explains. A local anesthetic can be used to reduce any discomfort.

It is important for a licensed veterinary professional to insert the microchip to ensure it is placed properly with good technique and without accidental injury.

According to Dr. Gensler, in addition to reuniting lost pets with their owners, several microchipping companies offer resources such as free access to poison control hotlines with licensed veterinarians.

Pet owners should always keep their contact information up to date with the microchip company when moving, changing phone numbers, or updating email addresses.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, the benefits of microchipping animals definitely outweigh the risks. Although we can't guarantee a shelter or veterinary clinic will always be able to read every microchip, the risk that this will happen is very low, especially with ongoing technological improvements.

The WVMA now offers a pet microchip lookup tool on their website, powered by the American Animal Hospital Association.

To discuss microchipping in pets, contact your local WVMA veterinarian. Find one online at ww w.wvma.org
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Ringworm: What's the Deal?

Summer time brings fairs, festivals and traveling. Increased activity means veterinarians must be on top of their game to help keep the public aware of potential issues arising from animal contact.

One common condition animals and humans can contract is ringworm. In fact, all animal species are susceptible to ringworm. Michael Wolf, DVM, of Country Doctors Veterinary Service in Menomonie, explains humans and animals can contract ringworm through direct contact or contact with shared brushes, halters, clippers, blankets, and other animal supplies.

Veterinarians are crucial to ensuring fair-goers are safe at the fair. "All animals appearing at fairs and shows must be inspected for ringworm before entering the premises, since it is easily transmitted to both humans and other animals attending the show," Dr. Wolf states.

Not only is ringworm contagious, it is also a nuisance.

“Ringworm is a spore forming mold called a dermatophyte that sets up household on the skin of virtually any animal species. It can take many forms in people such as athlete’s foot, toe fungus or the typical circumscribed lesions,” describes Dr. Wolf.

He also explains ringworm is a misnomer because worms are not part of the condition. Ringworm appears as a defined circular ring in which skin may rise and be itchy or scaly. Hair loss can also occur within the circumscribed area.

The duration of ringworm will vary. “It is usually self-limiting and it can last from one to four weeks,” Dr. Wolf says. “The duration is reduced if it is recognized early and antifungal disinfectants and/or medications are applied.”

“Good nutrition with appropriate vitamins and minerals assure healthy skin to reduce susceptibility to ringworm infection and to aid in resolving the condition sooner,” he continues.

Dr. Wolf treats large animal ringworm using antiseptic or disinfectant cleansers as directed. He recommends disinfecting tools, accessories, head stalls and feeders to prevent reinfection.

“Antifungal over-the-counter products can be used if prescribed by a veterinarian in which appropriate considerations for food safety are addressed, although they are not very practical for herd-wide infections and treating a large number of head individually for several days,” he adds.

Dr. Wolf recommends the public should avoid contact with people and animals possibly infected as well as use proper hygiene. Ringworm can be an especially serious infection for those who are immunocompromised.

Large animal owners should thoroughly inspect new herd additions as well as isolate them for 7 to 10 days to prevent the spread of ringworm.

To discuss ringworm further or get more of your questions answered, contact your local WVMA veterinarian. Find one online at www.wvma.org !