



PROCEDURES

Title of Policy	Animal Identification
Policy Number	3.4
Category	Animal Welfare
Approval Body	Board of Directors
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CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

When an animal comes into the care of Meant 2B Loved Pet Rescue Society, determining potential ownership or animal history is an important first step. This may be done through a microscope scanner, a tattoo, or other identifying item.

SCOPE

These guidelines and procedures apply to all volunteers, employees, and board members of Meant 2B Loved Pet Rescue Society who are involved in the intake of animals to the rescue's care.

DEFINITIONS

Microchip: Microchips are small, electronic devices implanted under the animal's skin, usually between the shoulder blades, and serve as a permanent form of identification. It's important to note that microchips are not GPS trackers and do not provide real-time location information.

Microchip Reader: Microchips only function when scanned by a microchip reader, revealing the chip's unique ID number, which can be matched to the owner's contact information in a pet registry. While not a tracking tool, microchips are crucial for ensuring that no previous ownership or medical history is overlooked during intake.

RFID tags: similar to microchips but are sometimes placed in collars or harnesses. These devices store information that can be scanned and traced back to the owner.

Tattoos: a common form of permanent identification used in some spay/neuter surgeries or by breeders, rescues, and shelters.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. MICROCHIPS

1.1 Before scanning the animal, test the microchip scanner on a known working microchip (e.g., embedded in a stuffed animal). Ensure that the scanner is functioning properly, by:

- a) Holding the scanner a few centimetres above the animal's body.
- b) Starting the scan at the neck, between the shoulder blades, where microchips are typically implanted.
- c) Slowly move the scanner in an "S" pattern from the shoulders down the back, covering the entire area around the neck and upper back
- d) Scanning the sides of the animal's neck and shoulders if a chip is not detected, as microchips can sometimes migrate.
- e) Scanning multiple times, ensuring the scanner passes in different directions to increase chances of detection.

1.2 Microchips may not be detected if:

- a) **the animal's fur or skin is wet.** Moisture can interfere with the scanner's ability to detect a microchip. Dry the animal's fur before scanning.
- b) **the chip has migrated.** Microchips can migrate to areas other than the typical implant location. Ensure to follow 1.1 (d).
- c) **the battery is low.** Check the scanner's battery level before use. A low battery may prevent proper detection.
- d) **you are scanning close to stainless steel or metal.** Metal surfaces, such as stainless-steel tables or equipment, can interfere with the scanner. Move the animal away from metal objects and try again.
- e) **the chip is positioned oddly.** Microchips might be positioned at an odd angle, making them harder to detect with a single pass. Scan in multiple directions and try holding the scanner at different angles.
- f) **the chip is defective.** Microchips can malfunction over time or due to manufacturing defects.
- g) **the scanner is incompatible.** Ensure that the scanner is compatible with various microchip frequencies, as some older or International microchips may not be detected by certain scanners.

2. TATTOOS

2.1 Locate the tattoo by looking at common locations like:

- a) inside an ear
- b) on the abdomen, typically near the spay/neuter scar
- c) on the inner thigh or flank

If you are unsure if an animal has a tattoo, check the above areas thoroughly.

2.2 Examine the tattoo, looking for:

- a) Clarity. Tattoos may vary in clarity depending on their age and the animal's skin condition.

Older tattoos can fade, become smudged, or be difficult to read.

- i. **Take multiple photos/videos** of the tattoo from different angles and in different lighting conditions. This can help your team work together to decipher hard-to-read or faded tattoos.
- ii. **Use a clean, dry cloth** to gently wipe away dirt or fur that may be obscuring the tattoo.
- iii. **Shave the area** if necessary, to get a clearer view of the tattoo (especially if the animal has thick fur).

2.3 Document the Tattoo

a. Photos and Videos: Capture clear images and videos of the tattoo from multiple angles and lighting to improve readability. This documentation should be shared with the team, particularly if the tattoo is difficult to interpret.

- i. Store the images in the animal's digital records (e.g., Trello) for future reference and as part of the intake documentation.

b. Note the Tattoo in Records: Record the tattoo number, letters, or symbols exactly as they appear. Include any partial or unclear sections.

- i. Indicate the location of the tattoo (ear, abdomen, etc.).

2.4 Deciphering the Tattoo

- a) **Work as a Team:** If the tattoo is hard to read, share the photos/videos with other team members to cross-reference and help decipher any unclear sections.

- b) **Refer to this PDF** <https://bcpetregistry.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BC-Pet-Registry-Tattoo-Code-2023-May-edition.pdf> to determine the Tattoo Code of the clinic/shelter it was performed at and in which year.

c) Common Examples: Spay/neuter tattoos can be found on the abdomen or flank and often consist of a simple line or small symbol. These indicated that the animal has been fixed. In the case of ear tattoos, they typically include numbers or letters that can be traced back to the clinic or organization where the desexing procedure was performed. This type of tattoo helps identify the clinic but does not always provide owner information.

Breeder or identification tattoos often include a combination of letters and numbers used by breeders or rescue organizations. These tattoos may refer to litter numbers, registration, or other information that can help trace the animal's history or ownership.

2.5 Follow Up with the Veterinarian or Previous Owner (if needed):

- a) If the tattoo is associated with a spay/neuter clinic, you can contact the clinic for confirmation of the animal's surgical history.
- b) If the tattoo indicates the animal was previously owned by a breeder, attempt to track down the breeder or rescue organization for additional information.

2.6 Troubleshooting Hard-to-Read Tattoos

a) Faded or Smudged Tattoos:

- i. Gently clean the area with a damp cloth to improve visibility. If fur is in the way, consider shaving the surrounding area.
- ii. Try adjusting the lighting or taking photos/videos from multiple angles.

b) Partially Missing Tattoos:

- i. Sometimes, tattoos may be incomplete or too worn to fully decipher. In this case, record whatever details are visible, even if partial. You can also try adjusting the contrast or sharpness in the photos to make the tattoo clearer.

c) No Visible Tattoo but Suspected:

- i. If the animal is known to have been spayed/neutered or has a history that suggests it should have a tattoo, but none is visible, carefully recheck all common tattoo locations.
- ii. If there's still no tattoo, make a note in the animal's record.

3. Other Forms of Identification: In addition to tattoos and microchips, animals may have other forms of identification, including collars with tags or implanted RFID tags. Here's how to handle these:

a) Collars and Tags

- i. **Check for ID Tags:** Many animals wear collars with metal tags that list the owner's contact information or veterinary information. Always check for:

- Owner's name and contact information
- Veterinary or rabies tags
- Municipal or registration tags (which can be traced back to local authorities for more information)

- b) **Remove the Collar:** Gently remove the collar to inspect it thoroughly. Check both the inside and outside of the collar for any written information, such as:

- The owner's name and phone number
- Any other identifying numbers or details that may be inscribed on the collar

- c) **Document the Tag Information:** Record any identifying information found on the tags and ensure the animal's records reflect this. Include details like:

- Tag number
- Municipal license number
- Rabies vaccination tag and clinic
- Owner's contact details

4. RFID Tags (Radio Frequency Identification)

- a) **How to Check:** Use a scanner designed for RFID tags to check if the animal has one. If detected, follow the same documentation procedure as microchips and ensure the information is logged in the animal's file.

