

## Compulsory Microchipping of Dogs in the UK – A Quick Reference Guide

This document is intended as a quick reference guide for vets and RVNs in practice. The numbers refer and link to the [BSAVA guidance on microchipping](#), where more detailed information and links to relevant legislation can be found. The full document Compulsory Microchipping of Dogs Regulations in the UK [can also be downloaded here](#).

### Main Points

Vets & RVNs have a professional responsibility to advise the owner of their obligations under the law to microchip their dog and to keep accurate and up-to-date details on an approved database, but there is no legal requirement to inform the authorities if a keeper does not have their dog microchipped. Any adverse reactions relating to microchips or microchipping must be reported to the VMD. In case of ownership disputes, practice staff should read the [RCVS guidance](#) on this area, seek advice from your professional indemnity provider and keep detailed clinical notes.

### 1. Legislation

From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 all dogs over 8wo must be fitted with a microchip compliant with ISO 11784 and ISO 11785, unless one of the exemptions applies, and accurate details must be recorded on a database and kept up-to-date. There are slight differences in the regulations in the devolved regions. Since 2012, [dogs in NI must be microchipped before applying for a dog licence](#).

### 2. Exemptions

- Where a veterinary surgeon has certified the dog as a working dog. In such cases the time limit for the dog to be microchipped and details recorded with a database is 12 weeks. The RCVS guidance on tail docking can be [accessed here](#).
- Where a vet believes that a dog should not be microchipped because it would adversely affect its health or welfare (e.g. due to severe illness, infection/injury/adverse reaction at standard implantation site, clotting abnormalities, size or behavioural concerns), we recommend that the vet should include the reason for the exemption on the certificate. It is the keeper's responsibility to have the dog microchipped by this time unless a further exemption certificate is issued. We will provide a link to official exemption certificates when they become available.

### 3. Microchip Implantation

Microchips may be implanted by:

- a vet, or an RVN/vet student/student vet nurse acting under the direction of a vet
- an individual who has been satisfactorily assessed on an approved training course
- an individual who received implantation training including practical experience prior to the regulations coming into force. The Welsh Regulations indicate that these "grandfather rights" will cease after 2y from the regulations coming into force.

Vets should advise owners of puppies at time of tail docking under the relevant legislation that:

- In England & Wales, they must be chipped by a vet or RVN acting under the direction of a vet.
- In NI, they must be microchipped by a vet or RVN person working in the same practice who should and the relevant certification completed.

It is recommended that microchips are implanted in dogs at the standard site to minimise the risk of migration and to maximise the chance of finding the chip. In the UK and Ireland, the standard site is subcutaneously in the midline between the scapulae. In continental Europe, the standard site is on the cranial third of the left side of the neck.

#### **4. Scanning**

Ensure all staff members have a standardised, thorough scanning method including checking scanner orientation, battery life and re-scanning with a different scanner if necessary. Dogs imported from outside Europe may have a chip which cannot be read by standard UK scanners. If a dog is over 8wo by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and has a non-compliant microchip (including FDX-A microchips with 10 digit numbers, encrypted chips, or those unable to be read by an ISO compliant transceiver reading at 134.2Hz), then it must be re-implanted with a compliant chip and registered. This also applied to imported dogs imported within 30 days of arrival.

#### **5. Registration**

The breeder is the first keeper, and must arrange for the puppy to be microchipped and registered before transfer to its new owner/keeper unless an exemption applies. The new keeper must, unless the previous keeper has already done so, ensure that accurate and updated details are recorded on the database, including at transfer of ownership. These include:

- full name and address and telephone number of the keeper (also email address in Wales),
- original name/identification number of the dog, and current name if different
- sex, breed (or description if cross-breed) and colour of the dog
- dog's date of birth (best estimate possible; or exact date of birth if the breeder is the keeper),
- unique number of the microchip implanted,
- breeder's licence number and the name of the licensing local authority where applicable.

For most dogs, the keeper is the person with whom the dog normally resides.

Working assistance dogs - the keeper is the body responsible for its training and allocation until it stops working.

Homeless owner - contact details for someone the keeper stays in touch with may be entered.

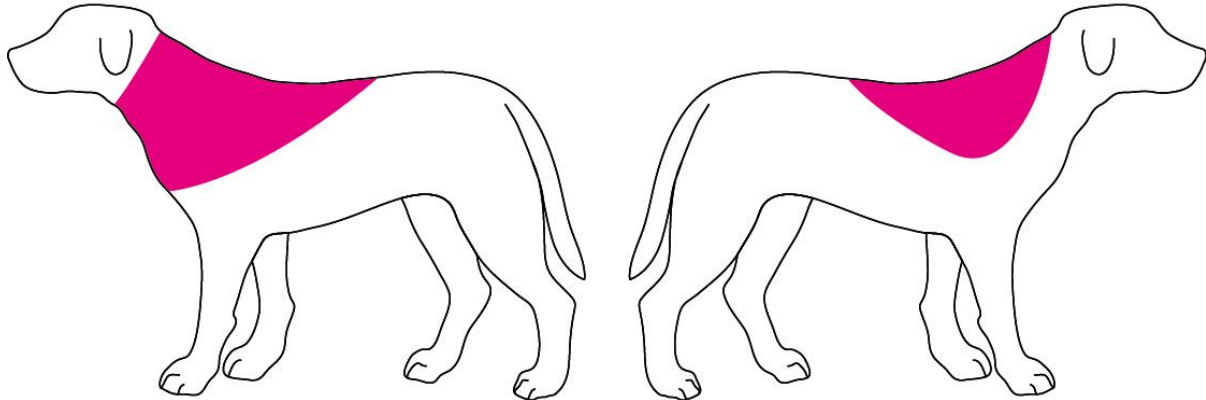
#### **6. Adverse reactions/events**

Any adverse reaction to or failure of a microchip must legally be reported to the VMD adverse events reporting scheme at <https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/microchipeventreporting/>. [The RCVS guidance on microchipping](#) now advises that vets and veterinary nurses should report any adverse reaction to microchipping, including migration or failure of a microchip to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). An adverse reaction is considered to be any unnecessary pain or suffering, or any pathology that is or seems to be caused by a microchip or its implantation, or a microchip that has migrated or failed. Adverse reactions/events include:

- **Implantation reactions** e.g. haematomas, infection, foreign body-type reactions. Any tumours detected around the site of implantation should be reported. Implantation in to the spinal cord relates to implantation technique and should also be reported.

- **Microchip failure** should be reported after re-scanning as described above, and only if there is evidence that it was present.
- **Microchip migration** should be reported, although this is not necessary if the chip is within the shaded area in the diagram below. Defra is seeking advice on more objective measures.

### Reporting – not required in shaded area



## 7. Offences and Penalties

Amongst others, it is an offence for anyone to:

- implant a microchip if they are not on the list outlined in section 3 above,
- fail to microchip a dog and record the relevant details with an approved database before transferring to a new keeper,
- fail to comply with a notice requiring to properly microchip a dog (including updating database records),
- fail to report an adverse reaction to or a failed microchip.

### What ifs?

Many practices will take on the responsibility for registering the details of the pet and keeper for any microchips they implant. It is suggested that all members of staff involved in this process are able to make the owner aware of their responsibilities under the law including keeping the database details up to date.

If **no microchip is found**, the vet or RVN should advise the owner of their legal responsibility to chip and register the dog. Record this advice in the clinical records. Vets and RVNs do not have a legal responsibility to report owners who have not had their dog microchipped.

If **presented with a puppy of 8wo that has not been microchipped**, the vet or RVN should advise the owner of their legal responsibility to microchip and register the dog and encourage them to do so. Vets and RVNs do not have a legal responsibility to report the breeder.

If the **microchip has failed**, the dog will need to have a new compliant microchip implanted (unless it qualifies for an exemption) and the new details registered on the database. It is recommended that the vet records details of the reasons for re-implantation and provides a written declaration to the owner about the old and new microchip. The microchip failure must be reported to the VMD.

If the **owner wishes to confirm the presence of an unresponsive microchip**, diagnostic imaging can be used if attempts to palpate the microchip have failed. It is not necessary to remove a failed microchip unless it is associated with some pathology.

If the **microchip has failed and the dog has a Pet Passport**, Defra states that a new compliant chip must be inserted, the dog re-prepared (rabies vaccinated) and a new passport issued with both microchip numbers recorded in section III (Marking of the Animal) and covered by lamination. In the section XII (OTHERS), the OV should state that there is another microchip present which could not be scanned and read. The dates of microchip readings and the numbers of the microchips must be stated and the OV should sign and stamp this statement.

If the **microchip is intermittently failing and the dog has a Pet Passport**, Defra recommend that attempts be made to read the chip and having gained a reading, a new chip may then be inserted, and for old style/non-laminated passports, the details can be written in and initialled. For new style/laminated passports issued after 29/12/2014, a new passport should be issued with both microchip numbers recorded in section III (Marking of the Animal) and covered by lamination. In the section XII (OTHERS), the OV should write, "On (date), the microchip said to be present could not be scanned and read and I inserted microchip number (new) on the same day, in accordance with Defra requirements" or similar wording. The dates of microchip readings and the numbers of the microchips must be stated and the OV should sign and stamp this statement.

If there is a **potential ownership dispute**, the [RCVS now provides guidance](#) on how to deal with such issues. The BSAVA advises veterinary practices should only disclose information to the data base provider to reduce the chance of being drawn into an ownership dispute, be aware of the RCVS guidelines in detail, contact your professional indemnity provider and keep detailed clinical notes.

If the **owner wishes to dispense with a collar**, they should be reminded that it is still a legal requirement that a non-working dog wears a collar, with a tag or plate or badge attached to it, inscribed with the name, address and postcode of the keeper when in a public place ([The Control of Dogs Order 1992](#)).

The [Republic of Ireland introduced microchipping](#) of puppies in September 2015 and expanded this to all dogs in March 2016. The government of the Isle of Man consulted on compulsory microchipping of dogs in 2015; we are currently awaiting their response.

**If there are any other questions you would like us to clarify, please email us at [s.everitt@bsava.com](mailto:s.everitt@bsava.com).**