Companion Animal Identification

An Emergency Management Guide
Microchip Identification Procedures

From

The American Microchip Advisory Council for Animals

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‘Animals Depend Upon People To Do What is Right’
Introduction

“One of the basic principles of comprehensive emergency management is that we can do something useful both before and after the disaster-triggering event occurs.”

FEMA Emergency Management Institute, Emergency Manager Training

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, it is estimated that over 60% of storm evacuees stranded with their pets would not leave their residences because first responders would not allow pets to accompany their owners in the evacuation process. This endangered or cost the lives of pets and their owners.

Largely as a result of this, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS) was passed in 2006. This legislation was designed to prevent pets from being left behind in the wake of a disaster. It requires states to do advanced planning for pet evacuation to be eligible for FEMA assistance. The final bill signed by the President contains the following provisions:

✓ Requires that emergency evacuation plans accommodate household pets and service animals.
✓ Grants FEMA authority to assist in development of these plans.
✓ Authorizes federal funds to create pet-friendly shelters.
✓ Requires the provision of essential assistance for individuals with household pets and service animals, and the animals themselves, following a major disaster.

There are many areas essential to disaster planning. Having animals permanently identified and registered in a national database prior to, during and after a disaster is a critical element. The post-disaster goals of successfully reuniting pets and their families, as well as managing displaced or stray pets, can be achieved with the planned use of microchip identification.

The American Microchip Advisory Council for Animals (AMACA) presents the following Guidelines to be incorporated into any emergency management plan. This report covers the use of a microchip system (microchipping, scanning and registration) in emergency preparedness and the recommended protocols for microchip scanning, implanting and record keeping in the wake of an emergency.

Correctly used within a comprehensive emergency plan, RFID (Radio Frequency Identification - better know as microchip identification) is an extremely useful and flexible tool. The focus of this manual is on the use of RFID as a component of planning for companion animals during the four phases of an emergency or disaster. These Guidelines begin with the use of the microchip as a Mitigation tool and follow through with the recommended protocol for use of the microchip system in the Preparedness, Response and Recovery phases of an emergency.

After two decades of field use, millions of animals have been microchipped and thousands of effective scanners are in the hands of and are being used by care givers and veterinarians. The American MicroChip Advisory Council for Animals knows that microchips can save lives.

Nationwide 24-Hour Microchip Call Centers stand ready and waiting to reunite registered pets with their owners following disasters. This advanced ‘safety net’ of equipment and personnel can and should be incorporated into any emergency plan that includes companion animals.
Mitigation

“Mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Mitigation planning is a process to identify policies, activities and tools that can be used to implement mitigation actions.”

FEMA Emergency Management Institute, Emergency Manager Training

Microchip Identification: The Best Mitigation Tool

To mitigate is to “lessen the shock; to make less severe or painful.” There is no better tool for companion animals than one that quickly and efficiently gets them back to their families and out of harm’s way. A simple microchip and current owner registration can drastically change the outcome for pets caught in an emergency or disaster.

In the face of a disaster, every effort should be made to follow the prescribed pet evacuation protocol that allows for companion animals to be evacuated with their owners. Pets accompanying owners under these pre-planned state evacuation programs are required to have ID. Microchips are best suited for this purpose.

However, not all people or pets will fall neatly into planned protocol. Unforeseen events will create inevitable separation of owners and animals. Depending upon the scale of the event, there could be a significant number of small companion animals and larger ones, such as horses, left behind.

There is no way to predict in advance which animals may become separated from their owners. Therefore, preemptive microchip identification along with easily accessible owner contact information is essential. Pets and owners registered in a recognized 24/7 national database before the emergency, have a near-certain chance for seamless reunion in the aftermath of the emergency. Owners or their alternates can be contacted quickly, resulting in rapid removal of the animal from the emergency system.

With millions of small companion animals and horses currently fitted with a microchip in the United States, an Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) should include the use of microchip identification.

Benefits of Using the Microchip as a Mitigation Tool

- Reduce the amount of time an animal must remain under the care of responders.
- Meets ID requirements for state planned PETS Act programs.
- Reduce the number of animals that must be transported to alternate or remote shelters.
- Reduce the cost of lengthy impounding.
- Reduce the anguish and stress-related health issues for the lost pet.
- Reduce the anguish of the owner who may have multiple disaster-related problems.
- Reduce confusion regarding unclaimed animals.
- Enable animals that must be moved or adopted to have a ‘microchip identifier’.
- Enable all responders who deal with the animal anywhere in the country, to have a consistent means of unique identification and access to chip registration information.
Responsible agencies should plan for the worst disaster possible in their related area. A disaster is **anything** that separates an animal from its caregiver, including such things as a house fire, burglary or vehicle accident with the pet escaping, wildfires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, death of the owner or the pet being lost.

Since 1996, the extensive installed base of microchips and scanners in the United States have operated at 125 kHz. This de facto microchip standard, referred to as the United States or the American standard, enables animal care givers and rescue teams to work together to save the lives of pets separated from owners during these events.

**Case Study**

Two dogs are rescued by first responders in the wake of a hurricane. Citizens have evacuated and most lines of communication are out. Owners are displaced and do not know where their dogs are being held.

**Case 1**
Collar, no tags, NO microchip.

**Case 2**
Collar, no tags, microchip found.

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**No microchip number is detected.**

No owner or veterinarian information available.

Digital pictures are taken, the dog is tagged and chipped.

Descriptions written and dispensed to web services and networks. A 'hit or miss' strategy is the only option.

A major disconnect occurs between the impounded pet and the displaced owner struggling to locate her pet.

The owner may or may not have internet access and is not recorded in any database.

The owner has no information regarding where her dog may be. Rescue workers have no information about the owner or the dog.

Hundreds of internet sites struggle to get information organized and displayed online.

Costs mount as the dog remains in the system for weeks or months.

This preventable process is costly, time consuming and often fails.

This dog remains in the emergency system for weeks, even months. Often never reunited with his family.

**Microchip number is detected.**

Chip number called into the 24/7 Microchip Call Center.

The dog’s name and all owner information are given to the emergency worker.

The owner has called her Recovery Network and alerted them as to her location after the storm.

The responder is able to reach the owner. Arrangements are made for the pet’s safe reunion with his family.
Microchip Registration: Mitigation Planning

1. **Owner information must be accessible nationally.**
   It should be profoundly stressed to owners, veterinarians, shelters, animal control, pet stores, and any other microchipping entity, that the chip must be registered in a national database. The act of microchipping should not be separated from the registration of the chip. Microchips, if they are to be relied upon during large scale disasters, must be registered at a national level, not simply held by a veterinarian or the local shelter or humane society. The total devastation wrought by the 2005 hurricane season demonstrated the critical importance of not relying upon local ‘in-house’ microchip registration.

2. **Alternate contact information is critical.**
   Microchip registration should include complete alternate contact information in case the owner has been displaced or cannot be reached. The alternate should ideally be out of the ‘disaster zone’ as this will save valuable time for workers.

3. **NOTE:** State governments are not typically prepared for pet recovery at the disaster level, and should not be relied upon for immediate 24/7 owner information, even if they have a registration program in place. Recovery organizations scanning for microchips following a disaster are trained to call national databases.

4. **Plan to prevent these known microchip tracking and registration issues**
   a. The problem most frequently encountered by recovery organizations is that the owner information has not been submitted or has not been updated with one of the national databases.
   b. If the owner information has only been held locally at a vet clinic, shelter, pet store or other facility, and has not been registered nationally, the recovering party does not know who to contact.
   c. ‘Backtracking’ unregistered microchips through manufacturers is inefficient, costly and often does not result in locating owners.
   d. In the face of a major disaster or emergency, local entities and vets are often victims too and unable to access records.

5. **The AMACA “Umbrella Recovery Call Center”**

**Programs That Insure Success**

- Conduct Microchip Clinics for the public.
- Heighten public awareness by utilizing the media.
- Work with local veterinarians and shelters to educate the public.
- Establish corporate or business sponsors for a Microchipping Day ahead of disaster season.
- Visit AMACA USA.org for resources and ideas.

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Microchip identification and registration combined with the P.E.T.S. Act and the dedicated work of emergency responders, can drastically reduce the trauma of disaster for lost pets and displaced owners.
**Preparedness**

“Planning how to respond when an emergency or disaster occurs and garnering the resources to respond effectively...this is preparedness. First responders can successfully discharge emergency management ONLY by taking certain actions beforehand.”

*FEMA Emergency Management Institute, Emergency Manager Training*

An Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is at the center of comprehensive emergency planning both for people and for animals. People can speak and explain their situations. Animals cannot.

Microchip identification for an animal is like a social security number. It stays with the animal and is a unique identifier. It can ‘speak’ for him and explain from where he came, and provide contact information for his caregiver.

The benefits of such a system are obvious to emergency managers and responders.

Therefore, effective preparedness and the EOP for animals should always include a microchip identification system that utilizes these five components:

1. **Microchipped animals.**
   These animals can be assumed to have owners, caregivers or veterinary/shelter records. Microchip ID numbers will be traceable through a national database. There is no need to re-chip the animal. The implanted chip can be used as an inventory and recovery tool.

2. **Non-microchipped animals.**
   These animals may or may not have owners or collar ID, but in any case should be microchipped upon entering the emergency system in order to inventory them and track possible relocation or adoption of the animal.

In all cases a microchip is a consistent, uniform, and positive ID number that can be used at all levels of emergency management.

**Notes:**
Putting Your Microchip System To Work

1 Preparing a Contact List
   Important contact phone numbers and email addresses to include:
   a. Microchip recovery networks
   b. AMACA - American MicroChip Advisory Council for Animals
   c. Microchip Manufacturers
   d. Available volunteers or other personnel
   e. Parties with Mutual Aid Agreements
   f. Other parties with available microchip supplies and resources

2 Planning and Choosing Microchip Equipment

Planning for and choosing the correct microchip equipment to sustain the duration of a disaster in your state requires:
- Technical information from microchip manufacturers.
- Field recommendations from experienced disaster management teams who have incorporated microchips into their programs.
- AMACA resource guide “Choosing Compatible Microchip Equipment” (www.AmacaUSA.org)

Below are guidelines from the American Microchip Advisory Council for Animals:

Microchips Only microchips of the 125 kHz frequency type should be used in disaster preparation efforts and during a disaster as inventory control. These 125 kHz microchips comply with the American standard, meaning that they can be read by the installed base of readers used by animal shelters and veterinarians.

To be effective, microchips:
   a. Must be sterile, single-use, ready-to-use.
   b. Must be read by the existing reader technology used within the United States. (See Scanner section below)
   c. Must be from suppliers that proactively track the distribution of their chips, and maintain a 24-hour call center or participate in the AMACA Umbrella Call Center.

AMACA recommends: All companion animals being microchipped for recovery purposes in the United States be implanted with microchips operating at the de facto American standard of 125 kHz to insure interoperability for all rescue workers anywhere in the country.

Scanners Scanners in the possession of shelters, emergency response teams, veterinarians, and animal control agencies will read microchips that operate at 125 kHz. (at this time, Spring 2007) This installed base of scanners provides a broad, uniform scanning ‘safety net’. NOTE: Please visit www.AmacaUSA.org to get further statistical data on scanners that read more than one frequency. Documented shortcomings found in these scanners may hamper effective disaster management identification procedures.

Scanners chosen for emergency management:
   a. Must be tested under disaster-simulated circumstances to determine realistic field use.
   b. Must read 125 kHz microchips.
   c. Must be compatible with existing installed base of scanners used in the United States.
Prepare and Maintain Supply Locker

Contents and quantities may vary with size of and/or advanced notice of emergency.

1. Microchips
2. Scanner(s)
3. Batteries: Appropriate to scanner used, at least 3 per scanner.
   Note that some scanners require a power source for recharging.
4. Pre-paid registrations: Arrangements with your microchip supplier should be clear regarding paper forms, online or other protocol.
5. Ink pens and/or pencils: At least two dozen.
6. Pre-printed NCR intake forms: Appropriate number equal to the animals equipped to handle. Sample form viewed www.AmacaUsa.org
7. Record protectors for numbers of animals
   a. Paper Folders
   b. One-gallon size freezer Ziploc bags, corner hole, pre-punched.
   c. Wire ties
8. Contact sheet: Information for all important resources. Laminate or use plastic liners.
9. Test microchip- at least one of the 125 kHz type. Preferably permanently mounted to the supply locker.
10. Waterproof markers-at least 6 (fine tip Sharpie)
11. Collars: Ident-A-Band and/or leather or canvas collars, id tags, string, bar-coded labels or other method to attach.

Inventory Management

The supply locker must be kept dry and inventoried annually. All equipment is to be inspected, tested, maintained and replaced as necessary.

a. Scanners should be checked semi-annually and stored without batteries and placed in a bubble-wrap protective sleeve.
   b. Batteries should be of the alkaline type. If rechargeable batteries are to be used, appropriate chargers should be available.
   c. ‘Test’ microchips should also be checked to make sure they are properly functioning.

Agreements: MOU’s (Memorandum of Understanding) and Mutual Aid Agreements

The establishment of appropriate accounts and contact information for ordering initial and additional supplies will speed the delivery process. Identifying appropriate funding for the initial and restocking of supplies is important. It is possible to have agreements with other cities or agencies to obtain supplies. Recognize the need to properly track the use of microchips if obtained from other agencies.

a. Microchip suppliers: Contact information and accounts established.
b. Scanner suppliers: Contact information and accounts established.
c. Other sources of equipment and supplies
   1. Regional Animal Control agencies
   2. Regional Animal Shelters
   3. State Veterinarian’s Office
   4. Regional veterinarians
   5. National or Regional Animal Welfare organizations
d. Personnel: Pre arranged sharing of emergency personnel

Agreements and the corresponding contact information should be reviewed and updated regularly.
Prepare and Train Personnel
Pre-disaster training (and training at the site of a disaster) regarding the correct use of a microchip system is critical to its success. An organizational chart should be prepared in advance with all responsibilities assigned. Personnel must be trained in the following:
   a. Proper scanning techniques.
   b. Proper microchipping techniques.
   c. Proper record keeping: How to register and track chips.
   d. Protocol for identifying collected animals.
   e. Protocol for record keeping regarding owner tracking through duration of stay.
   f. Protocol for record keeping of animals transferred out of facility.

Establish Microchip Protocol and Procedures
AMACA recommends that all manufacturer instructions on microchip products and supplies be carefully followed, and that procedures be established for the following:
   a. Abbreviated sheets describing Standard Operating Procedures in waterproof coverings should be readily available for distribution to appropriate personnel.
   b. Microchip procedure.
   c. Scanning procedure.
   d. Tracking of found microchip.
   e. ID/recording protocol upon collection of animal in the field.
   f. ID/recording protocol upon arrival of collection of animal at staging area.
   g. ID/recording protocol for animal inventory use.
   h. ID/recording protocol for animals transferred to other shelters.

Microchips as an Inventory Tool
Microchips are the preferred method of inventory management of collected animals in the response and recovery phase of emergencies. Therefore a commitment must be made to follow through to properly track any microchips found or implanted, and make sure they get registered to the final owner.

If this commitment or ability is not there, it is better not to install microchips on impounded animals. Why? The use of an undocumented or non registered microchip in an emergency situation can cause extra work for disaster team workers in other areas, and can create false hope in future emergencies.

If commitment to the full use of microchip identification is made, it is an excellent immediate and long term inventory tool. The microchip number is recorded on the Animal Intake Form and becomes the permanent reference number for a variety of circumstances including:
   a. Inventory management at the staging area.
   b. Unique identifier if animal is moved to another site.
   c. Registered Adoption ID for new owner.
   d. Registered ID for reunited owner.
   e. Registered ID if pet is ever lost again at any time in his life.
“Response covers the period during and immediately following a disaster. Officials provide assistance to victims of the event and try to reduce the likelihood of further damage.”

**FEMA Emergency Management Institute, Emergency Manager Training**

1. **Assess the Situation**
   First responders must review supplies on hand and assess immediate and future needs. A check list should include:
   a. Scanners/batteries
   b. Microchips
   c. Registration forms
   d. Intake forms
   e. Animal identification supplies
   f. Review MOU’s, Mutual Aid Agreements and resources contact list. Request any additional supplies and equipment projected to be needed.

2. **Volunteers**
   Evaluate knowledge and skills as volunteers come on board. Many volunteers will bring their own supplies including microchip scanners or microchips. It is important that this equipment is checked for efficiency and interoperability. Volunteer-supplied scanners and chips should be logged in by the scanner serial number and microchip numbers and linked to the volunteer.

   **Assign volunteer duties according to their experience as follows:**

   1. **No Experience**
      a. Train: Proper scanning procedure
      b. Train: Record preparation
      c. Train: Tracing microchips

   2. **Some Experience**
      a. Perform proper scanning procedure
      b. Perform record preparation
      c. Track microchips
      d. Train safe and effective method of restraining animals while being chipped

   3. ** Experienced (UAN training, veterinary technician, etc.)**
      a. Perform proper scanning procedure
      b. Perform and organize record preparation
      c. Track microchips
      d. Safe and effective method of restraining animals while being chipped
      e. Perform proper procedure for implanting microchips
Animal Intake

The most critical and seemingly obvious act when utilizing RFID microchips in an emergency response plan is to: **SCAN EVERY ANIMAL.**

When ownership or responsible party information is immediately available from a microchip call center, the time of care and need for extended housing of recovered animals is greatly reduced.

Animal Collection in the Field: Microchip ID Record Keeping

In a sizable emergency, there may be more teams retrieving animals from the field than there are available scanners. Therefore, **upon taking an animal into field-custody:**

1. Preliminary identification should be made immediately in the field with a temporary collar marked with a waterproof permanent marker or other means to positively identify the animal.

2. A permanent record for the animal is created in the field and **must** include the location or actual address from which the animal was obtained. This information will become valuable in seeking the owner later.

3. Identification should be attached to the animal in a fashion that it will not come loose or become unreadable.

4. Obviously, if scanners are available to field personnel, scans for microchips should be made immediately recording the chip number on the field record.

Animals at the Staging Facility: Microchip ID Record Keeping

1. Animals should be scanned for a microchip as soon as possible.
2. The chip number should be documented on the Intake Record.
3. The animal should be re-examined for other identifying marks, existing collars or tags
4. Any information found should be recorded in the animal record and photo attached.

Guidelines for completion of the animal intake record can be viewed at [www.AmacaUSA.org](http://www.AmacaUSA.org)

It is critical to correctly and effectively scan each animal coming into each holding facility as soon as possible as part of the intake procedure.

- **If an animal already HAS a microchip when entering a holding facility:**
  1. Note microchip number on animal intake form. Do not re-chip.
  2. Contact the microchip recovery network for owner/caregiver information.
  3. Contact the owner or caregiver.
  4. If owner information has not been provided to the recovery network, follow the manufacturer’s recommendation for tracking the chip.
  5. Keep **accurate and consistent** records of date, time and information obtained.
The American Microchip Advisory Council for Animals (AMACA) offers an Umbrella Call Center for assistance in tracking all microchips. That number is _______________________. Other contact numbers for microchip databases are as follows:

AVID PETtrac: 1-800-336-2843 Ext. 4
Companion Animal Recovery (CAR): 1-800-252-7894
HomeAgain Recovery Network: 1-866-738-4324
InfoPET Recovery Network: 1-800-463-6738
24 PetWatch: 1-866-597-2424

If animal does NOT have a microchip when entering a holding facility:

If the decision was made during Preparedness to microchip animals as an inventory tool, the animal must now be correctly implanted with a microchip following the manufacturer’s instructions for chipping, scanning and registering. It is imperative to have trained personnel performing these tasks:

1. Correctly implant microchip and note microchip number on intake form.
2. Incorporate the chip number into the animal record.
3. The microchip number and paperwork should follow the animal if moved to another location.

Registration and Follow-Through

If the operation is computerized, all animal data and microchip information can be easily updated as necessary. **Registration of the microchip must occur** if:
1) Owner claims the animal, or 2) Adoption occurs.

Master microchip inventory sheets must note the disposition of each animal, for example:

1. Foster care: Contact information of caregiver
2. Returned to owner: Record and submit information
3. Adopted: Record and submit information
4. Euthanized: Date, details

**TIP:** In insure that registration is finalized, do not allow pet owner or adoptive family to mail in the registration forms.

(If a decision has been made not to microchip, then the animal should be properly identified by Ident-A-Band, leather or canvas collars, id tags, string, bar-coded labels or other methods. Refer to United Animal Nations (UAN) training guide on proper technique to identify animals.)

Notes:
Recovery

“Recovery is the final stage of the emergency management cycle. It continues until all systems return to normal or near normal operation.”

FEMA Emergency Management Institute, Emergency Manager Training

Final Actions for the Recovery Phase Should Include:

1. Review registration forms to assure completeness. Compare to animal inventory records.
2. All Registration forms completed and mailed or submitted online.
3. Return borrowed equipment.
4. Return unused microchips and registrations to donor organizations or companies.
5. Mail or enter online all pre-paid registrations to the respective recovery databases.
7. Make notes about what improvements can be made to your Animal Identification and Recovery plan.
8. Pat yourselves on the back for a job well done.

Notes:
“The likelihood that animals will survive an emergency such as a fire or flood, hurricane, tornado or a bioterrorist attack, depends largely on emergency planning done today.”

Department of Homeland Security ‘READY’ Program

The American Microchip Advisory Council for Animals website has a list of useful instructions, documents and forms. Please visit www.AmacaUSA.org for titles such as:

Microchip Implantation and Scanning Procedures
Success Stories for Public Awareness
Choosing Compatible Microchip Equipment
Ready America ‘Preparing Your Pets for Emergencies’
How To Plan and Conduct a Successful Microchip Clinic

AMACA commends the thousands of dedicated volunteers, veterinarians and SART teams who have undertaken the tasks of efficient emergency preparedness and response for all animals caught in the wake of disaster.

We salute you and thank you.

The American Microchip Advisory Council for Animals