



## Compulsory microchipping of dogs: Additional guidance for vets

### Legislative background

On 6 April 2016 it became law for every keeper of a non-certified working dog older than 8 weeks to ensure that it is microchipped:

[The Microchipping of Dogs \(England\) Regulations 2015](#),  
[The Microchipping of Dogs \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#)  
[The Microchipping of Dogs \(Scotland\) Regulations 2016](#)  
[Dogs \(Amendment\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#)

The responsibility of the vet is to inform the keeper of their obligation to have their dog microchipped and the benefits of doing so. It is the keeper's responsibility to ensure their dog is microchipped and registered on one of the authorised commercial databases.

*If it is found that a dog has not been microchipped the veterinary surgeon does not have any responsibility to report the owner but whenever possible should advise the owner of their legal responsibility to have the dog microchipped. We would recommend that this advice is recorded in the animal's clinical record.*

### RCVS guidance on microchipping

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) also sets out supporting guidance on microchipping, implantation, the Microchip Adverse Event Reporting Scheme, removing microchips and client confidentiality:

[RCVS Microchips, microchipping and animals without microchips](#), which vets should follow if there is an ownership dispute or an animal is suspected stolen.

### BVA policy position on microchip scanning and microchip databases

In our policy position on microchip scanning and microchip databases we set out:

- the role of keepers and vets;
- the circumstances when we would recommend that veterinary practices scan for microchips; and
- our calls in relation to the proliferation of microchip databases.


### Exemption from microchipping

The microchipping regulations include provision that all dogs are microchipped and their details recorded on a database. Puppies must be microchipped by the age of eight weeks and before transfer to a new keeper unless one of two exemptions apply:

1. Where a veterinary surgeon has certified the dog as a working dog in accordance with tail docking legislation in [England](#), [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#). In such cases the time limit for the dog to be microchipped and details recorded with a database is 12 weeks.
2. Where a veterinary surgeon certifies that a dog should not be microchipped because it would **adversely affect its health** (in Wales, the exemption requires certification that microchipping

The following situations may require exemption from microchipping:

**Size of dog** while the majority of dogs can be safely implanted with a microchip before eight weeks of age there may be cases in toy or miniature breeds of dog where, in the professional judgement of the veterinary surgeon, microchipping should be delayed for a matter of weeks to allow the puppy to grow.



**Severe illness** where a dog has a severe debilitating illness it may be appropriate for the veterinary surgeon to recommend that microchipping is delayed for a short period to enable recovery to take place.

**Infection or injury or adverse reaction at the normal site of microchipping** where a dog has an infection or injury at the normal site of microchipping it may be appropriate for the veterinary surgeon to recommend that microchipping is delayed for a short period to enable recovery to take place. If the injury is likely to permanently preclude microchipping at the normal site the veterinary surgeon should consider implanting the microchip at a different site. The implantation site should be as close to the normal implantation site as possible to maximise the chance that the microchip will be located by routine scanning processes. Where a microchip is deliberately implanted at a different site this should be recorded in the clinical records and on any records relating to the microchip e.g. database records or Pet Passport.

**Abnormalities of blood clotting** – where a dog has any condition that interferes with blood clotting it may be appropriate to delay microchip implantation until the situation has been rectified or stabilised.

**Behavioural concerns** – where implantation of a nervous dog is considered likely to reinforce negative/fearful responses and adversely affect ongoing management and handling of that pet in future consultations, it may be appropriate to delay microchip implantation tempo

### **Certificates of exemption**

Guidance on writing a certificate of exemption and template certificates are available below for England, Scotland and Wales:

[The Microchipping of Dogs \(England\) Regulations 2015, regulation 3\(2\) - Certificate of Exemption](#)

[MyGov.Scot Guide to exemption certificates in Scotland](#)

[The Microchipping of Dogs \(Wales\) Regulations 2015 Regulation 3\(2\) - Certificate of Exemption](#)

We recommend that vets include the reason for the exemption by noting it on the certificate. It is also important to ensure that the owner of the dog, or person authorised to represent the owner, signs the




## Types of adverse event

### Implantation Reactions

These usually occur relatively soon after implantation and are commonly linked to the implantation procedure eg haematomas (bleeding under the skin) or infection (an abscess near the site or an infection spreading systemically, making the animal ill).

On rare occasions, an animal may react to an implanted microchip, as with any foreign material introduced into the body, with an inflammatory response. These along with any evidence of infection or other pathology should be reported as adverse events.

There are a very small number of reports of paralysis resulting from implantation into the spinal cord. Although these relate to problems with implantation technique rather than a problem with the microchip, these should also be reported. There have also been a very small number of cancers reported around the site of microchip implantation. Although these may or may not be related to the implantation of the microchip (c.f. feline injection site sarcomas) these should still be reported so that the VMD is able to collect accurate data on the incidence of these types of reaction.



Failed microchips and Pet Passports

Given the potential implications if a microchip fails on entry to the UK such as the cost to the owner of resulting time in quarantine veterinary surgeons should encourage their clients to have

Defra provides the following advice on unreadable microchips:

If the original microchip cannot be read, the pet must be re-implanted;