

IDENTIFYING YOUR PET

There are many forms of identification for almost every kind of pet, with some forms more appropriate for different pets or lifestyles.

COLLARS

Collars are the most common form of identification used for the dog and cat pet population, and are available in a wide variety of styles and colours. They are a relatively inexpensive and efficient way of letting others know where your pet belongs.

For cats there are break-away collars that either break apart at the buckle or have an elastic piece stitched in that stretches if caught on branches etc. Most cat collars are made of nylon webbing and come with a bell attached to make catching birds a more difficult pastime.

Dog collars come in an infinite variety for training, but for identification purposes a plain buckle style collar is best. Collars are commonly made from nylon webbing or leather, with either a classic belt buckle clasp or a plastic clicking buckle.

Tags should be attached to dog AND cat collars and are available in smaller sizes specifically for cats and small dogs. Basic information should include your address and phone number. It is not as important to include your pet's or your name. It is also advisable to write the phone number and address on the collar in case the tag falls off.

A word of caution: Choke chains or training collars should not be left on the dog outside of training time. Not only can the collar become caught and cause your dog to panic with possible tragic results, but it is also possible for dogs teeth to become trapped in the links while playing. Because of this, it is suggested that you purchase two collars - one for wearing, and one for training.

TATTOOS

Tattoos are no longer just for the purebred and pedigreed. Most veterinary clinics now offer a tattoo for little or no charge. In BC there is a joint program set up by the SPCA and veterinarians that assigns letters to each clinic. Any animal tattooed in a clinic receives the assigned clinic letters followed by the pet's individual number and then a letter indicating the year. The tattoos are usually offered whenever an animal undergoes general anaesthesia and they do not seem to annoy the pet after the procedure. Even if the tattoo does fade with age, it can still be used to differentiate the unmarked brown tabby cat from the one with the faded tattoo in its right ear.

MICROCHIPS

At present the most advanced and fool-proof method for identification, microchipping, is available for almost any species of pet. The uses of microchip identification are variable - recovery of lost or stolen pets, captive breeding programs, exotic species livestock. Microchipping involves the insertion of a rice sized chip under the scruff of the neck by the shoulder blades in dogs and cats. This can be done at the time of a general anaesthesia such as a spay or neuter or in an awake patient. There is a one time fee for registration and all that is required is for the owner to keep this information up to date with the microchip company. Each microchip has an individual number that is readable by all scanners.