

MICROCHIP IMPLANT

by Lee Netzler

I saw an article in the paper that there was a clinic to be held to implant I.D. microchips in companion animals. It was scheduled to take place on a Sunday afternoon at the Safeway grocery store about a mile from us. Well, I have thought about having that done whenever I heard about it, but it seemed that whenever the subject was raised, the place where it was going to be done was always some distance away—Denver, Loveland, etc. So, when this information appeared, I promptly got on the phone and made a couple of calls to find out more about it.

First I called the Longmont Humane Society and they were very encouraging. They, Boulder Animal Rescue, and several other shelters in the area scan all incoming pets for microchips. As a way to identify and recover a lost animal, they heartily recommended the procedure. But, they didn't know who was conducting the clinic at Safeway on Sunday, which made me a little nervous.

Next, I called our vet to ask a few more questions. They also recommended the procedure, and I found out two other things that I didn't know:

1. My vet does do microchip implantations at their veterinary hospital where we go with Rusty (and where I have been going since I first got Piper). Surprisingly, I didn't learn that they provided that service until now!
2. They use what is known as the AKC format in the microchip. Apparently it is one that the AKC recognizes and is probably the most widely used. I didn't know it, but there are apparently other formats which are used as well. But, some of those formats can only be read by the business organization which sells them and maintains the register for that particular brand of microchips.

The problem with an unusual format is that the shelter which scans for a microchip might not be able to read the chip unless they subscribe to the particular organization that uses it. Not good. If you lose a pet and the pet is found by someone who is able to scan for a microchip number, you want the format of the microchip to be one that can most commonly be read.

Anyway, the implant charge at the Safeway clinic was advertised at \$30. The vet charges \$40. Given the fact that our vet uses the AKC format, and also the fact that I know and trust them, we chose to have them do an implant on Rusty.

So, we went down late in the afternoon on Friday and had a chip implanted. It is an interesting procedure. They shave a small spot between the shoulder blades, and sterilize that area. Then they insert a needle and the microchip is implanted as though they were administering a vaccination shot. The needle is about twice as large as the size used to inject normal vaccines, so it is not exactly painless, but neither is it very painful. We asked to watch the entire procedure, which the vet agreed to. When he got the "shot," Rusty winced, but didn't make a sound--no yelp or biting.

Before doing the implant, the vet "scanned" the chip with a device about the size of a large hand held calculator to make sure the chip was readable. The number on the chip (a combination of about a dozen letters and numerals), displayed on the scanner the same way numbers would show on a calculator.

After they implanted the chip, they scanned Rusty again in his withers area, and lo and behold, the numbers appeared on the scanner just as they had when they scanned the microchip in the needle before they implanted it.

The rest of the process is registering. The vet updated their records, so they have it on file. I filled out a long form, information about Rusty's name, breed, AKC registration number, etc., The process included providing information about my vet—name, address, phone number, etc., and information about me and an alternate person to contact---our names, addresses, phone numbers, and so forth The forms were mailed to the registry headquarters in North Carolina.

Now, if Rusty becomes lost and is recovered, when the chip is "read" electronically, they can use that number to access the info that I filed on the form. And, if all works well, my phone should ring soon after they find him to tell me that a stray dog named Rusty is in custody and that his microchip data identified him and names me as the owner.

Oh, almost forgot, there is a \$12.50 fee (good for the lifetime of the dog) to record the implant number with the registry so that all the info, including revisions, is maintained on file.

Anyway, thought you would be interested to hear this account. The procedure isn't exactly cheap, but I know that I would gladly give \$1000 to anyone who found Rusty if I lost him.

It was certainly a new experience around here—for the people and the dog!

There is a small postscript to that story, too.....

A few days later, I took Rusty back to the vet's to have an annual blood test to check his thyroid levels as I reordered his prescription of Soloxine. While we were there, the vet (one of the co-owners, and the fellow I have been friends with since I first got a previous Scottie), walked into the large reception room where four of us waiting. I waved at him as he passed through--and since he had done the teeth cleaning on Rusty the preceding week and I had not seen him since then, I hollered across the room at him, and commented:

"Great Job on Rusty's teeth cleaning--they really came out pearly white and he showed no ill effects from the anaesthetic--not even the least bit groggy when we took him home." I continued, "We are getting more than our share of veterinary action this month--first the teeth cleaning and then we came back on Friday and Rusty got an implant." (Of course, I meant the I.D. microchip implant.) The vet stopped and got sort of a funny look on his face and then said, "You did?"

I replied, "Yes, and that I.D. scanning technology is pretty interesting stuff."

At that point he broke out into sort of a shy smile, walked over to me and in a stage whisper he said, "You know we also do what we call "implants" which are small hard plastic pieces which we insert in male dogs organs."

Then I realized why he looked a little astonished when I hollered across the room at him, since he was the one who did the neutering on Rusty about 5 years ago.... We both got smiles over my out-loud comments!!