

How to Scan a Cat for a Microchip

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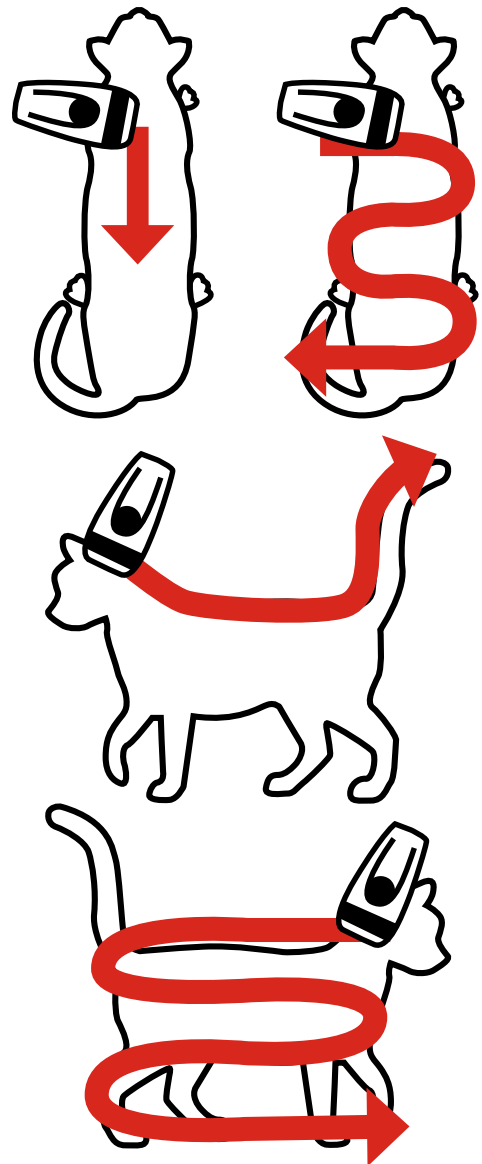
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SAVE A LIFE: PLAN TO SCAN!

How to Scan a Companion Cat

- 1. Scan a test chip.** You should always have a test chip nearby to ensure the scanner is working properly.
- 2. Position your scanner.**
Hold the scanner parallel to the cat, either barely touching or less than an inch away. Gently rock the scanner from side to side as you progress.
- 3. Scan in a pattern.**
While scanning, move the scanner in an “S” shape, from side to side. This is the best way to ensure that microchips at all orientations and in crevices are detected.
- 4. Go slow.**
You should spend between 10-20 seconds scanning each animal, scanning no more than 6 inches per second.
- 5. Begin between the shoulder blades.**
This is the area where microchips are implanted, but they occasionally migrate. Scan between the shoulders all the way from one shoulder to the other several times. Next, scan up and down the length of the back, from head to tip of tail.
- 6. Scan the sides.**
Repeat the S-shaped pattern on each of the cat’s two sides, taking care to scan the legs as well, all the way to the paw. Remember—chips can move!
- 7. Scan before each step.**
As a cat moves through a veterinary office or shelter, scan before each move or procedure to ensure you have the right cat.



How to Scan a Community (Feral) Cat

- **Scan as soon as possible**—remember, many eartipped cats are also chipped!
- Working with a community cat in a trap? Try to scan the cat while it is in the trap. If your facility possesses a wand scanner, this can be inserted into the trap for a safe and clear reading.
- If no wand scanner is available, try to get the handheld scanner as close to the cat as possible. Keep in mind that this approach may be made less effective by the metal of the trap.
- If you cannot detect a chip with either of these methods, a trained professional should use a net or other method of confinement to allow for a full body scan.
- If you're in a shelter, don't wait—scan community cats the same day they arrive!

Troubleshooting

1. Scan the test chip again to make sure it is still working properly.

2. Still no luck? Ensure that batteries are fully charged.

Battery problems are a common cause of scanning issues.

3. Reposition your scanner.

Try turning your arm at a 90-degree angle. One end of a microchip reads better than the other, so increase your chances of finding the right angle.

4. Remove all metal from the scanning area.

Interference can be caused by computers, collars, fluorescent lights, and even the metal exam tables themselves.

5. Get someone else to try a second scan.

Chips that are overlooked on a first scan can often be picked up by a second operator.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT MICROCHIPS AND SCANNERS

Make sure you have a universal scanner. Not all scanners and not all microchips are created equal. In the U.S., microchips mostly function on three frequencies: 125 kHz, 128 kHz, and 134.2 kHz.¹ Some scanners are able to detect only one of these frequencies. Ensure that your organization's scanner can detect all three frequencies commonly known as a "universal scanner"—otherwise you will inevitably miss many chips.

LOOKING UP A MICROCHIP

Different microchip companies maintain different databases, so if the microchip is not showing up in one database, it does not mean the microchip isn't registered elsewhere.

The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) offers a universal pet microchip lookup (www.petmicrochiplookup.org) where you can find the registry in which the microchip is enrolled. The lookup will provide you with the registry's phone number and/or website. You can then contact the registry directly for the pet owner or caregiver's contact information.

Note: This lookup tool only allows you to find the microchip registry; you cannot register your microchip on this website.

¹ <http://vet.osu.edu/assets/pdf/depts/prevMed/research/Microchipping.pdf>

ABOUT ALLEY CAT ALLIES

Alley Cat Allies is the only national nonprofit dedicated exclusively to the protection and humane treatment of all cats.

For over 27 years, Alley Cat Allies has led the movement to save cats' lives. With advocacy, education, and grassroots organizing, we champion innovative programs and policies that serve communities and save cats. Since our founding in 1990, we have popularized Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as the only humane and effective approach to community cats. Before Alley Cat Allies, TNR was virtually unknown in America, and no local governments supported it. Today, more than 600 municipalities have officially embraced TNR.

Alley Cat Allies has changed how all cats are treated—pet, stray, feral, and each cat in between. We advocate for a variety of progressive policies to protect cats, including the transformation of the American animal shelter system, which still routinely kills 70 percent of all cats who enter.

Thanks to our more than half a million supporters and countless advocates, Alley Cat Allies works in hundreds of communities each year. To learn more about how we save cats' lives, visit www.alleycat.org.



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