

CAWGW position statement: Microchipping of Cats

Summary

CAWGW would like to see the microchipping of cats made compulsory in Wales. It is the only safe and permanent way to identify a cat. We believe this will have real welfare benefits for cats. Unlike dogs, cats are free to roam and a microchip increases the chances of a lost or injured cat being safely reunited with their owner.

Background

The PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2018 found that 26% of adults in Wales own a cat, (600,000 cats) and 38% (230,000) of these owned cats are not microchipped.¹ The percentage of unchipped cats in Wales compares unfavourably with the PAW Report's UK-wide figure of 32%. CAWGW believes that making microchipping of cats mandatory in Wales would result in a similar increase in microchipping that was clearly demonstrated in dogs following the introduction of the Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015, and would also send a strong message that microchipping is part of responsible cat ownership.

Impact

Members of CAWGW frequently take in lost or stray cats without a microchip and it can be very difficult to trace the owner. In 2017, 16% of the cats that came into Cats Protection's Bridgend Adoption Centre were relinquished as a stray. For their Wrexham Adoption Centre, the figure was 22%. Some may well have been owned cats but due to the absence of a microchip this was impossible to establish. Sadly, this may mean that many owners may never know what happened to their beloved pet and a cat that has a home may end up being rehomed needlessly, something that could be prevented if cats were microchipped and the details kept up to date.

Access to microchipping

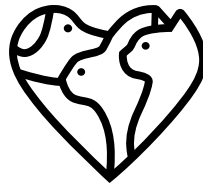
Owners will be offered a microchip for their kitten or cat when they register at their vets, and start their vaccination schedule. Charities will microchip cats as part of their standard practice, for example, all cats and kittens over 12 weeks of age adopted from Cats Protection will be microchipped as part of the charity's Minimum Veterinary Standards. CAWGW members also operate schemes across Wales to assist with the cost of microchipping a cat, especially for those on low incomes, such as PDSA, who have microchipped over 5,000 cats over the past three years for free in Wales through their PetWise for Cats programme. It's a straightforward and cheap way to provide your cat with a permanent form of identification, saving both public and charitable time and resources, and avoiding the risks associated with cats wearing collars.

The process for mandatory microchipping

In a recent Blue Cross survey, 79% of respondents were supportive of legislation that would make the microchipping a legal requirement for cats.² If microchipping of owned cats became mandatory, we would advise that the legislation followed the Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015 which come into force on 6 April 2016. This requires all dogs to be microchipped in Wales, and that the details of the registered owner be kept up to date. As with dogs, it would be the responsibility of the cat owner to get their cat microchipped and vets would not be enforcers of the requirement to microchip. However, vets can encourage owners to microchip their cats, thus helping to reinforce the responsibilities of cat owners to their pet under the Animal Welfare Act.

¹ PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2018 www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

² YouGov surveyed 2,141 adults online for Blue Cross between July 2-3 2018, of which 543 were cat owners. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).



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Reporting cats killed in Road Traffic Incidents

CAWGW would support formal encouragement to ensure that those within Local Councils responsible for cleansing and refuse scan any deceased cats they collect from the roadside, and that there is a process in place to inform the owners and record the death so that figures can be reported. North and Mid Wales Truck Road Agency and South Wales Trunk Road Agency should also be required to collect, scan and notify owners of any cat RTA victims picked up. We would also like to see legislation mandating that if a driver accidentally injures a cat, they must seek emergency veterinary treatment for that cat where s/he can also be scanned for a microchip and the owners located.



¹ PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2018 www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport

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