Microchips are everywhere these days! Which kind is best? How do you choose? The questions and answers below are based upon the thousands of calls we get each year from breeders, veterinarians and pet owners across America. Confused? Here are some guidelines and facts.

First, the good news. All microchips have come down in price and you have lots of choices! However they are not all created equal. “Microchipping” is done only once in the puppy’s lifetime. So make it count. Quality and type of chip are things to consider. Make sure the chip is guaranteed. The decision you make affects the pet and his owner and his veterinarian for many years to come.

Q & A

How do microchips and scanners work?
Chips are actually tiny radio transponders that operate at a particular frequency. They have no moving parts and no battery. The microchip scanner locates the chip by sending a radio wave signal. So it is essential that chip and scanner be on the same frequency, or they will not ‘connect’.

You will see ads and websites for many different brand names, but all microchips operate at one of only 3 different frequencies. A scanner might be able to read one, two or all three frequencies. If a scanner can read and display all three frequencies it is said to be a true ‘universal’ scanner.

Why isn’t there a Standard for all chips in America?
Can you say - politics! Many of you recall that there was quite a fight a few years back about whether or not to have a microchip standard for America’s pets. While the idea was a good one, the way it was proposed - being forced through the USDA’s Animal Welfare Act - was not. The effort failed as it should have.

However, left with no official standard, our country was fair game for microchip makers around the world. The good news - prices dropped. The bad news – these incoming microchips operated at a different frequency, unreadable by hundreds of thousands of United States scanners. This different type of chip was nicknamed the ‘ISO chip’ because it was conceived by the ISO - the International Standardization Organization, headquartered in Switzerland.

At the time, few if any shelters, vets or breeders could read the ISO-type of chip. Today the ISO chip is available and can be used, with some caution and wisdom. It should be pointed out that thousands of vets and shelters (and breeders) still cannot read or detect the ISO 15-digit chips. Pets with an ISO chip are still at risk if lost in an area where the scanners have not ALL been replaced.

Note: Breeders and pet stores who use an ISO chip in their for-sale puppies might consider disclosing to the pet owner that the chip is NOT readable by all scanners. The correct wording would be: “The chip in your puppy may not be detected by some scanners, including the scanner used by your veterinarian.”

Will the ISO type of chip ever become the standard for pets here?
No one knows if our country will ever officially adopt a standard for pet microchips. Thus far, it has not happened. ISO is not new technology. It developed in Europe the same time the United
States standard was developed here. All types of reputable chips, US and ISO types, are fine as far as quality. Readability is the issue.

Microchip prices are the same now for either the US 'standard' and ISO 'standard' chips, allowing consumers to decide what they want to use. Perhaps that is best and is the American way! The most likely scenario is that universal microchip scanners, which are slowly replacing the older ones that only read the US standard, will eventually solve the problem.

Today, many companies including ours, make and sell both types of chips. Breeders who are selling puppies overseas where ISO is the standard, should definitely order ISO chips when needed.

**How to choose the right type of chip for puppies?**
When breeders call our office asking this question, we offer a short quiz to help them decide. See how to "Choose the Right Chip for the Job" below.

**Chart # 2  The Right Chip for the Job**

Our veterinarian, Dr. John Wade, adds his thoughts, “Like most chip companies today, we make and sell all types of chips. However, if you are chipping puppies that will live in the United States, I still cannot recommend the use of an ISO chip. Microchip ID Systems fields thousands of lost-pet recovery calls. Rarely a day goes by that we do not deal with an ISO chip readability problem in our effort to find owners of lost dogs. The problem is simple. Not all scanners in this country have been replaced with ISO-compatible models. Not even close. This is particularly true in small-town shelters or veterinarian offices.

Fortunately, the solution is also simple. Until all of these scanners have been replaced, use a 125 kHz US-type of chip. All scanners, old and new, used by shelters, animal control and vet’s offices can read the 10 digit chips. Once the replacement of all of these scanners has been completed, it will be safe to use any frequency of chip.”

**How to choose a microchip scanner?**
If you need a scanner or want to replace your old one choose a scanner that can read all of the chips in your existing dogs and any chips you want to use in the future. For breeder use, look for:
1. Quality and durability
2. While many scanners claim to read all chips, some are better at this than others. Ask about the Return Policy of the company where you choose to purchase your scanner.
3. If you want a scanner that can read and detect all chips, past present and future, get a true universal scanner.

**What are the TOP 4 points to consider when choosing a microchip?**
There are four basic things to demand when choosing microchips for puppies:
1. The right operating frequency for your needs and those of the pup.
2. A sterile unit.
3. Some type of anti-migration protection. (So the chip will stay where you put it)
4. Expert instruction (if you need it) and a guarantee.

**What is all the new talk about microchip registration?**
All professional chip companies will keep track of the microchip numbers you purchase for breeder dogs. However, things have changed as far as chip registration for the new pet owner. Local shelters, especially in the northern states, are running low on adoptable dogs. Therefore, they are not as willing to track an unregistered chip back to the source. Thus, it has become a
necessity that the end owner of the pup, activate the chip in their name if they want to get him back if he gets lost.

**NOTE:** The Missouri Pet Breeders Association has stepped up to recommend microchip registration as an important part of well-puppy care. You should do the same if you are chipping puppies. Insist upon chip registration.

I do not want to pay to register chips in puppies I sell, but I do want the owner to do it!

*Help!* Yes, we understand. Today any chip can be registered with any registry. To simplify this, you can use the new ACT Cards with ANY brand or type of chip you use. ACT Cards guide the owner online where they can activate the chip in their new puppy. There is a small one time fee for the pet owner. Call us or call MPBA for free ACT cards for your puppy packets.

* Microchip ID Systems, Inc. is a private company, based in Folsom Louisiana. The company has been serving the pet industry and professional breeders for almost 20 years. Microchip ID produces several types of microchips, including both US and ISO standards. The company also sells other brand names of chosen partners. Company websites are: www.microchipIDsystems.com, www.MicrochipRegistrationCenter.com and www.MicrochipIDEquine.com

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