

BE PREPARED

by Dr. Carmen L. Battaglia

Some have said that never before in history has humanity been so unprepared for so many of our new technologies. In little more than a generation what we thought were the limits of our world have been transformed into new ways of doing things. Some have been unique opportunities to directly apply some of the new technologies to many of our most practical problems.

Most of us never expect to lose our pet or to be directly affected by a natural disaster. When the unexpected happens the facts show that most owners were caught by surprise and unprepared. Statistics for America show that thousands of pets are lost each year and the problem may be getting worse only because owners have not taken a simple preventative action. The material below focuses on a new era of technology for our pets and a new way to ensure their future. It also explains how a tiny microchip has revolutionized the way owners can protect their pets.

USING MICROCHIP TECHNOLOGY The microchip has many uses but when the American Kennel Club adopted it for the Companion Animal Recovery (CAR) program pet owners were given a new way to protect their pets. This technology can be used in any kind of animal at any age and it will last for their life. The microchip is an effective form of permanent identification. It is slightly larger than a grain of rice and is placed just under the skin by a veterinarian. It is unique because it has an anti-migration cap that helps prevent movement within the pet's body. Each chip is encoded with a unique and unalterable identification code that can only be activated when read by a scanner. For these reasons, the AKC recommends the HomeAgain® microchip, which is marketed by the Schering-Plough Animal Health Corporation.

HOW DOES CAR WORK? CAR was founded in June 1995 by the AKC to help reunite lost pets with their owners. As a not-for-profit organizational affiliate to the American Kennel Club, CAR is dedicated to providing lifetime recovery services for microchipped and tattooed pets. After a pet has been microchipped or tattooed, the ID number is enrolled with CAR who maintains a worldwide enrollment database and a recovery service that works 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year. Shelters and veterinarians throughout the United States use scanners when a lost pet is found. A call to the 800 number of CAR is simple and efficient. AKC/CAR has as its goal to eliminate those "LOST PET" signs from our neighborhoods by encouraging owners to ID their pet(s) with a microchip.

WHY IS MICROCHIPPING RECOMMENDED? We know from experience that microchipped pets have the best chance of recovery because the microchip is a permanent form of identification, which is easily scanned. While tattoos are a good form of identification lost pets are usually frightened and reluctant to let strangers search their bodies for their identification. Not only are tattoos difficult to find but many fade or blur over time. Collar tags also work but many come loose and are lost. Tags and tattoos should be considered the second form of protection and identification. The problem for most owners is that they do not expect to lose their pet, and when they do, it becomes their worst nightmare. Think back to the number of signs that we have all seen in our own neighborhoods. That "LOST PET" sign is a reminder that something went wrong. The unfortunate part of this is that thousands of unidentified pets are lost and may never be recovered. Some fall victim to theft, others are displaced during hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and other natural disasters. Those "Lost Pet" signs serve as a constant reminder that someone is missing a beloved pet. Our pets deserve better.

WHO SCANS FOR MICROCHIPS? Animal shelters, rescue agencies, animal control officers, and veterinarians are increasingly and routinely scanning found pets. In 1995, CAR established a scanner fund to place scanners at this "front line." Thanks to the efforts of CAR who donated over \$1 million toward this

important initiative, many shelters in America use scanners to check every new admission for a microchip.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY PET IS FOUND? When pets are found CAR can respond if the pet is identified. In the first years (1995-2000) CAR enrolled over 800,000 pets. What makes the CAR program work for owners and those who recover a lost pet is the toll-free 800 number and the CAR staff of Recovery Coordinators who are available 24 hours a day. They expedite your pet's return home. Once CAR is contacted, phone calls, FAX and email technology goes into action to immediately notify the owner. Does it work? You bet, over 45,000 pets have already been returned to their owners.

THE NEXT STEP Take your pet to a veterinarian and have it microchipped. Next, enroll your pet in CAR . Those who chip and enroll protect themselves and their pet from that worst nightmare. Remember any pet of any species can be microchipped and enrolled in CAR. CAR charges \$12.50 per pet, which includes recovery services for the life of the pet. Those interested in more information or in hosting a microchip clinic can write to the AKC Companion Animal Recovery, at 5580 Centerview Drive, Suite 250, Raleigh, NC 27606-3389 or call them at (800) 252-7894. CAR's email address is found@akc.org .You can also obtain more information at the [Companion Recovery Program](#) on the AKC website. Every responsible owner should take advantage of this technology and microchip their pet.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carmen L Battaglia holds a Ph.D. and Masters Degree from Florida State University. As an AKC judge, researcher and writer, he has been a leader in promotion of breeding better dogs and has written many articles and several books. Dr. Battaglia is also a popular TV and radio talk show speaker. His seminars on breeding dogs, selecting sires and choosing puppies have been well received by the breed clubs all over the country. Those interested in learning more about his articles and seminars should visit the website <http://www.breedingbetterdogs.com>