

FAQ's

Chapter 6: Animals and Fowl Code of Ordinances

- 1. Do microchips replace rabies tags?** No, the microchip DOES NOT replace the rabies tag. The microchip is replacing what was previously known as a City License tag. Previously, a city license came with a metal tag to indicate that the pet was licensed with the City of Houston. Now, all pets will be required to have a microchip, and the microchip is required to be *registered* with the City of Houston. The microchip replaces the licensing tag. The link below includes information about how pet owners can register their pet's microchip as well as the various registration fees:
https://www.houstontx.gov/barc/licensing_your_pet.html
- 2. Why does my pet need a microchip if they have a rabies tag that can also be traced?** Metal tags are not a form of permanent identification. Tags can get lost, become tattered and unreadable, and collars with tags can be placed on the wrong pet. As our society continues to make technological advancements, metal tags have become outdated and less efficient in the pet reunification process.
- 3. Typically, a microchip may be given at the same time as a rabies vaccine. What if my pet is too young for a rabies vaccine and gets lost before I have a chance to get the rabies vaccine and microchip?** There is no minimum age requirement for a pet to receive a microchip. Pets with identifiers that can be connected to an owner will be held for a 6-day stray hold to give officials time to contact the owner. See the section on "How will the reduction in stray hold times from 72 hours to 48 hours affect lost pets?"
- 4. How does The City of Houston Code of Ordinances Chapter 6 change what happens to my pet if he/she gets lost?** If your pet is lost, BARC Animal Enforcement Officers (AEO) who find your pet can look up your name and address in the registration database using the microchip number. The AEO can return your pet to you bypassing the shelter. There will be no need to call the microchip company to get the owner information. *Always be sure to keep your personal contact information updated with the microchip company AND the City of Houston.*
- 5. What if my pet is picked up by someone other than a BARC Animal Enforcement Officer?** *Always be sure to keep your personal contact information updated with the microchip company AND the City of Houston.* As long as your contact information is up to date, veterinary hospitals, non-profit animal shelters, and rescue groups can contact the microchip company and the microchip company will notify you that your pet has been found and where you should go to be reunited with your pet.
- 6. What if my pet is microchipped, but I did not register my pet with the City of Houston as part of the licensing requirement?** *Always be sure to keep your personal contact information updated with the microchip company AND the City of Houston.* If your pet is microchipped, but not registered with the city, AND your pet is picked up by a BARC

Animal Enforcement Officer – the AEO will take the lost pet back to the shelter for holding until you are able to redeem your pet. BARC staff will notify the microchip company that your pet has been located and is currently housed at the BARC Shelter. Additionally, BARC staff will work to contact you, via information received from the microchip company to redeem your pet. You will be required to register your pet at the time of redemption.

7. **How will the reduction in stray hold times from 72 hours to 48 hours affect lost pets?** When a lost pet is brought into BARC, the animal will be scanned for a microchip and screened for other identifiers such as a rabies tag, or collar with the owner's name and/or phone number. Pets with identifiers – microchip or otherwise- will be held for a **6-day stray hold** to give officials time to contact and reunite the pet with the owner. *The 48 hour stray hold is reserved for stray animals with NO IDENTIFIER to connect the pet with an owner.*
8. **What is a Veterinarian's responsibility as it relates to enforcement of the new city ordinance?** Veterinarians are not required to report non-compliance with the city ordinance, but are expected to notify clients living within the city limits of the new requirements.
9. **What if I can't afford a microchip?** BARC provides microchips at a cost of \$15. BARC will be hosting several microchip clinics throughout the year where pet owners can have their pet microchipped at a reduced cost or for free depending on the event. Please check the website or call 3-1-1 for information on upcoming microchip and vaccine clinics.
10. **If my pet is not microchipped and is at the city shelter, what repercussions will I face as a pet owner for non-compliance with the city ordinance?** Before your pet can be released to you, your pet will be rabies vaccinated, microchipped, and spayed/neutered. The pet owner will be responsible for fees associated with the impoundment in the shelter and getting the pet in compliance with the city ordinance.
11. **Will the City of Houston be providing microchips to veterinarians or veterinary hospitals to administer to owned pets?** No, clients are financially responsible for the microchip costs and registration of the microchip with the City of Houston for the licensing requirement.
12. **Who registers the microchip with the microchip company?** This is left up to the entity implanting the microchip. Some businesses and shelters register microchips for the client – it is done automatically through some software systems - and others leave this responsibility to the client.
13. **Who registers the microchip with the City of Houston?** It is the client's responsibility to make sure their pet's microchip is registered with the City of Houston.
14. **If a client prefers to have a license tag rather than a microchip, is this an option?** No, there will be no licensing tags available. The client may choose an identifier to place on their pet such as a tag with engraved contact information. However, if the pet is lost and is recovered by BARC, the pet will need to be in compliance with the city ordinance prior

to release back to the owner. *A pet with an identifier will be held for a 6-days stray hold to give officials an opportunity to contact and re-unite the pet with the owner.

- 15. What happens if a microchip has become unknowingly defective or unreadable, and the pet is at BARC presumed to be un-chipped?** A pet with no identifier will be held for a 48 hour stray period prior to moving forward. Pet owners with a lost pet should file a lost report for their pet through [24 Pet Connect](#) which is updated hourly. Visit BARC and check www.24petconnect.com under the “Lost My Pet” section if your pet has been lost. Annual visits to the Veterinarian can help identify defective microchips before it becomes a problem.

**This FAQ document was compiled by Dr. Roberta Westbrook, DVM after discussion and review with key staff members from the City of Houston’s BARC Animal Shelter and Adoptions.*