

Scottish Government submission of 26 July 2022

PE1938/E: Introduce compulsory microchipping of cats in Scotland

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2022 seeking further information from the Scottish Government on Petition PE1938 lodged by Carlie Power calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce the mandatory microchipping of cats in Scotland; and assess the effectiveness of current microchip scanning processes.

The Scottish Government's current position on whether the scanning of cat microchips should be compulsory in Scotland and in which circumstances this should take place

Additional to the information provided in our letter of 8 June 2022 the Scottish Government does not currently consider that microchipping or the scanning of microchips should be made compulsory for cats at this time.

It is our understanding that veterinary practices scan the microchips of animals presented to them, as a matter of best practice. Scanning at first visit or at the time of yearly check-ups may permit the identification of animals recorded as stolen or missing. However, the Scottish Government shares concerns expressed by UK counterparts that compulsory scanning could inadvertently place an enforcement role on veterinary surgeons, putting them in a difficult situation that detracts from their principal focus of providing treatment and care for the animal. It is not the Scottish Government's intention to place vets in what could be a potentially difficult situation, and we would consider carefully the views of the British Veterinary Association on these matters.

In the event that individuals are knowingly keeping a stolen or unchipped animal, it could potentially lead to an animal not receiving veterinary attention if compulsory scanning was known to be required, effectively putting the animal's welfare at greater risk

Vets and animal welfare organisations scan any stray animals presented to them as a matter of best practice and use any information gathered to

reunite the animal with the owners. The Cats Protection survey of 2021 suggests that the owners of around 71% of cats have accepted the recommendation in the Scottish Government's Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats and have voluntarily microchipped their pets.

Whether the Scottish Government believes veterinary staff would benefit from an awareness-raising campaign and/or training in relation to cat microchip scanning.

The Scottish Government considers that those in the veterinary profession will have sufficient knowledge of the benefits of pet microchipping and sufficient experience of scanning to not require further training.

We would of course be content to discuss the matter further with the British Veterinary Association.

Whether the Scottish Government considers the creation of guidance for local authorities on this issue would be beneficial.

The Scottish Government considers that the majority of local authority employees that encounter stray cats will already be employed as dog wardens. These employees enforce The Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016 and have gained experience in scanning animals for compliant microchips.

I hope this reply is helpful to the Committee's consideration of the petition.