

# Petitioner submission of 11 August 2022

## PE1938/F: Introduce compulsory microchipping of cats in Scotland

We thank the Scottish Government for their [submission on 26 July](#) to our petition.

The submission notes the Cats Protection survey of 2021 which 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. This is the figure taken from the PDSA Paw Report that DEFRA used to determine that advisory action is not enough. That [same report](#) also urges the Scottish Government to introduce regulations to make microchipping of pet cats compulsory in Scotland. Cats Protection, ourselves, and many other animal organisations back mandatory microchipping on the grounds that it increases the chance of missing cats being reunited with their owner and provides benefits to the cat on animal welfare grounds. Microchips support improved cat welfare by enabling quicker identification of their owner and enabling vets to carry out treatment in discussion with them, if required. The campaign we lead centres around road traffic accidents, and sadly we hear often of cats being euthanised, sometimes with very treatable injuries such as very minor cuts and bruises, simply due to the cat not having a microchip to assist in locating the owner.

Blue Cross stated in 2017 that a staggering 80% of cats that were brought into them were not microchipped, and for those admitted as a stray there was no way to track down their owners, leaving the pet charity to find them a loving new home. This uses valuable resources and prevents them helping genuine strays/ferals. Currently, due to the pandemic and cost of living crisis, more pets than ever are awaiting rescue help, with some shelters having waiting lists into the hundreds. Many cats are sadly being euthanised or being dumped. We have found that many rescue organisations believe a large section of animals in their care, mostly cats, do in fact have owners but there is no way locating them to send the cats home when no chip is present. Although a reasonable majority do microchip their pet, those that don't place strain

on local services such as veterinary practices, local councils, and rescues.

In terms of scanning microchips, campaign groups such as Tuks Law and Ferns Law have been campaigning for vets to scan for microchips at first presentation, as well as prior to euthanasia. Both issues were included in a recent DEFRA consultation. The British Veterinary Association has issued guidance for scanning prior to euthanasia, which we believe will soon include cats, but DEFRA are yet to publish further findings and intentions on both issues.

Our campaign, and this petition, does not refer to stray cats, but refers to deceased cats collected by councils that have, most likely, been hit and killed by a car. Employees do enforce The Microchipping of Dogs (Scotland) Regulations 2016 and have experience in scanning dogs for compliant microchips, but this is not routine for cats. Following years of campaigning and working with local councils in Scotland, the situation has improved in recent years. However, there is still a lot of work to do. The problem when it comes to cats is it tends to be waste departments, rather than dog wardens, who take on responsibility but often do not have microchip scanners. In the majority of cases the cats' remains will be sent to the local waste processing centre and kept in cold storage awaiting disposal. We have found that staff, at all levels, have a lack of understanding about how the process should work to enable owners to retrieve their beloved pet. Through direct contact working with some councils, we have encountered problems from not understanding how the microchip readers themselves work, to having no understanding of how they obtain owners details when they do get them working. Councils have no guidance to adhere to, and it is not uncommon for us to be asked questions which they shouldn't really have to approach us with.

The latest case we are dealing with is a cat called Sushi who lived in Glasgow and was collected by the council's waste teams. Glasgow City Council collected her, did not scan for a microchip, and proceeded to tell the distraught owner, who ended up travelling to the different waste depots to search their cold storage facilities herself, because staff 'didn't want to look at dead animals'. Upon complaint by the family, the council admitted they no longer scan cats because 'the microchip scanner does not work'. We have attempted to work with the council to help resolve this, which could be something as simple as charging the scanner, or potentially donating new scanners if required. Unfortunately, the council

were unresponsive, which led to us involving local councillors and MSPs. The family found the council to be extremely unhelpful and, despite causing them further unnecessary distress, with no apology, the Council did manage to remind the family that it is not a mandatory requirement to scan uplifted cats for microchips, nor do they have an obligation to notify owners. Although we fully appreciate it is not the council's fault that a driver likely hit and killed the cat, leaving the council to collect the remains, it is especially traumatic for people to learn their beloved pet, and part of their family, has simply been disposed of alongside general waste. There are councils that simply do not respect this issue and will likely continue to allow cats and owners to be treated this way, but there are others who would like to have a good system in place, yet they simply need help and guidance on how best to do this. Whether action comes in the form of mandatory action or simply best practice guidance, we urge action in this area.