

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 21 May 2025
9th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2145: Bring in compulsory microchipping for cats in Scotland

Introduction

Petitioner Jillian Brown

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make it compulsory for cats and kittens to be microchipped.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2145>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 10 February 2025.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 537 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received submissions from the Scottish Government and Cats Protection which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
May 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2145: Bring in compulsory microchipping for cats in Scotland

Petitioner

Jillian Brown

Date Lodged

10 February 2025

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make it compulsory for cats and kittens to be microchipped.

Background information

This legislation was passed in England in 2023, but sadly, it is still not compulsory in Scotland.

I run a Facebook page Cats Lost and Found West Lothian, Scotland, and the number of missing cats that are not microchipped is truly shocking.

It's heartbreaking to find deceased cats on the road. When a microchip is present and the owner's details are current, we can quickly reunite them with their beloved pets.

Organisations like Bear Scotland pick up deceased cats and work with another group to ensure someone is available to scan them. I've been to their depot myself and scanned a cat, successfully returning it to its owner. This process is vital for bringing closure to owners who may otherwise never know what happened to their furry friend.

Microchipping our cats and kittens in Scotland is crucial. It will significantly increase the chances of reuniting lost, stray, and even road-killed cats with their families, making a real difference in our community. Let's take action and spread the word about the importance of microchipping!

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on PE2145



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner is calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make it compulsory for cats and kittens to be microchipped in Scotland.

Existing legislation

Cats are protected animals under the [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#), under which anyone who is responsible for an animal has a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare. Section 37 of the [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) permitted Scottish Ministers to make codes of practice for protected animals. [The code of practice for the welfare of cats](#) was published in 2009.

The [code](#) covers all domesticated cats for which a person is responsible. It covers many aspects of caring for a cat's welfare including the need for a suitable environment, diet and to be protected from suffering, injury and disease. As well as the need to exhibit normal behaviour patterns and any need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals.

Although the code does not have legislative effect, it is intended to promote and give examples of good practice. Failure to comply with a provision of this Code, whilst not an offence in itself, may be relied upon as tending to establish liability where a person has been accused of an offence under Part 2 of the 2006 Act which covers animal welfare.

Microchipping

The [code](#) includes a section on identification, stating that 'your cat should be identified.' It states that there are two methods which can be used in combination to help trace to their owner should they become lost. These are microchipping and wearing a collar that has the cat owner's contact details.

The code states: "microchipping – this is the preferred method of identification. A microchip is a tiny computer chip, about the size of a grain of rice, that contains a unique identification number. It is injected under the skin of a pet by a vet or trained pet care specialist and the owner's details are kept on a database. This will help you to be re-united if your cat is lost."

The [Microchipping of Dogs \(Scotland\) Regulations 2016](#) means that dogs over eight weeks old in Scotland must be microchipped. This includes dogs being implanted

with a microchip and having their details registered on a compliant database. The current keeper is the person responsible for ensuring that a dog is microchipped. Failure to comply with the regulations are punishable by a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale, currently £500.

A 2024 [report conducted by Cats Protection](#) found that there were 840,000 owned cats in Scotland, 72% of which had been microchipped. This was slightly less than the UK as a whole at 75%.

The report referenced legislation introduced in March 2023 requiring all pet cats, in England, that are over the age of 20 weeks old to be microchipped by the 10th of June 2024. This decision was supported by a [2020-2021 DEFRA consultation](#) which found that 99% of respondents agreed that cat microchipping should be compulsory in England.

The 2024 Cats Protection report notes that microchipping numbers for dogs rose from 75% to 92% in the first four years following similar legislative changes. Microchipping cats has also become mandatory in [France, Belgium, Greece, Japan and some parts of Australia and Spain](#).

The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission's (SAWC) [report on responsible ownership and care of domestic cats](#) recommended that Scottish Ministers should introduce legislation to require the compulsory microchipping and registration of owned cats in Scotland.

They further recommend the development of a centralised database to simplify the process of registration. As well as a programme of public education to encourage further uptake of voluntary microchipping and registration, prior to the introduction of legislation.

They advocated against doing nothing because while 70% of owners voluntarily microchip and register their cats, there is no real evidence that the level of microchipping is increasing.

Benefits of microchipping

The [Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(Scottish SPCA\) have identified](#) that the main benefits of microchipping include a permanent form of identification. Consequently, if a pet is lost, stolen or injured a microchip can significantly increase the likelihood of the owner and pet being reunited. Animal rescue centres, veterinary clinics and animal control agencies routinely scan lost pets for microchips.

In turn, a microchipped animal may spend less times in shelters. Deceased cats can also be identified more quickly, giving an owner closure.

In cases of dispute a microchip can help an owner prove that a pet is registered to them through the contact information linked to the animal. Stolen pets with microchips can be traced back to their registered keeper. Therefore, if there are high levels of microchipping in an animal population it can act as a disincentive to theft.

Microchipping also reduces the chances of deliberate pet abandonment as owners can be traced. This can save resources as cats without microchips can more easily be assumed to be feral and therefore treated accordingly.

The [SAWC report](#) highlighted that there is little evidence of any significant welfare disbenefits and the experience of other countries, where there have been moves to require compulsory microchipping, does not suggest that this is problematic for animal welfare. Implanting a microchip at an early age, for example by 12-20 weeks of age in different jurisdictions, but ideally before the first transfer of ownership from the breeder/shelter to the new owner, would ensure that this becomes a routine part of acquiring a cat for new owners.

Barriers to microchipping

Barriers to microchipping include the need for well-run databases, such as a central database to house both owner and microchip information. As well as owners needing to ensure their information is regularly updated on the microchip databases.

While there would be a cost to owners for the process of implanting a microchip, it is small. The animal welfare charity [Blue Cross have reported](#) that depending on where someone lives in the UK the cost of microchipping a cat is £15-25 as well as a small fee when changing a pet's details on the database.

The [CATS report](#) found that, in 2024, of cats microchipped in Scotland 91% had up to date details.

Previous parliamentary engagement

Past discussions of mandatory chipping include: [PE1938](#) (2022) - Introduce compulsory microchipping of cats in Scotland.

When discussing the petition on the 8th March 2023, the Convener of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee stated "The Scottish Government has stated that it does not consider that microchipping or the scanning of microchips should be made compulsory for cats at this time. The recent submission raises concerns shared with UK counterparts that it could create an enforcement role for veterinary surgeons or result in pet owners avoiding taking their cat to receive medical attention if the animal is stolen or unchipped."

The petition [was then closed under 15.7 of the Standing Orders](#) on the basis that the petitioner is satisfied that the Scottish Government's current approach will adequately address the issue of mandatory microchipping of Scotland's cats.

Euan Ross, Senior Researcher, SPICe
26/03/2025

Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government written submission, 17 April 2025

PE2145/A: Bring in Compulsory Microchipping for Cats in Scotland

Thank you for your email of 14 March 2025 seeking a response from the Scottish Government concerning Petition PE2145 lodged by Jillian Brown.

The Petition seeks the introduction of legislation to make the microchipping of cats compulsory in Scotland, mirroring the requirement in England for owners to have their cats microchipped from 10 June 2024.

The recently published Scottish Animal Welfare Commission's (SAWC) report on the responsible ownership and care of cats in Scotland ([Report on responsible ownership and care of domestic cats \(Felis catus\) in Scotland Scottish Animal Welfare Commission](#)) recommends that the Scottish Ministers introduce legislation to require the compulsory microchipping and registration of owned cats in Scotland. The report, published on 27 January 2025, also recognises that around 70% of cat owners are already voluntarily microchipping and registering their cats, and that some owners believe that their cat/s do not require to be microchipped as they live indoors.

The Scottish Government's [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats](#) recommends that all responsible cat owners should consider microchipping their pets as the best way of being reunited with their rightful owners, should they be separated or found in the sad and distressing situations the petitioner describes. Owners who have microchipped their pets are also encouraged to make every effort to update their contact information should they move.

We are carefully considering all of the recommendations made by SAWC in its published report and will engage with stakeholders before any decision is made on a future direction.

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

Animal Welfare Policy Team

PE2145/B: Bring in compulsory microchipping for cats in Scotland

Cats Protection written submission, 2 May 2025

Background

Cats Protection is calling for compulsory microchipping of owned cats to be introduced in Scotland. A microchip is a chip, no bigger than a grain of rice, that is inserted under the cat's skin. Every microchip contains a unique code, which is registered on an authorised database alongside contact details for the cat's owner. It usually costs between £20 and £30 to have a cat microchipped.

- Microchipping is a safe and permanent method of identifying a cat.
- 8 out of 10 stray cats taken in by Cats Protection's network of Scottish adoption centres and branches are not microchipped, which equates to hundreds of cats. When Cats Protection takes in a lost or stray cat without a microchip, it can be very difficult to trace the owner and sadly this may mean a cat that has a home ends up being rehomed needlessly. Microchipping will help to ensure that we can reunite cats swiftly and can help more stray and abandoned cats.
- The most common reasons cat owners in Scotland give for not microchipping their cats are:
 - their cat does not go outside,
 - their cat does not stray or far,
 - they haven't thought about microchipping¹
- Housecats can easily slip out of open doors and windows and cats can become startled by loud noises causing them to flee and get lost. Any cat can become lost or injured. Microchipping a safe, permanent safe of reuniting cats with their owners.

Cat Road Traffic Accidents

- **Cats Protection carried out Freedom of Information requests in 2022 asking Scottish councils about cat RTA victims. A total of 65% of councils said they scan cat RTA victims in 2022.**
- Of those councils that scan cat RTA victims, **80% tried to identify and contact the cat owner.**
- Cats Protection has created a scanning best practice guide for councils and highways staff on how to collect cat RTA victims and contact their owners. The guide can be found here: <https://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/lost-found-and-feral-cats/local-authority-advice-dead-cats>

Compulsory microchipping in England:

- **Microchipping of owned cats became compulsory in England from 10 June 2024.**
- In England, all pet cats over 20 weeks old must be microchipped and registered on a compliant database – or owners could risk a fine.
- There is wide public support for compulsory cat microchipping with a government consultation on Cat and Dog Microchipping and Scanning in England² receiving over 33,000 responses and 99% of respondents supported compulsory cat microchipping in England.

¹ Cats Protection's Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Scotland Report 2024 [cats-report-scotland-2024.pdf](#)

² [Cat and dog microchipping and scanning in England, Consultation outcome](#)

Single point of access for microchip databases:

- Cats Protection is calling for the introduction a single point of search for relevant authorities scanning microchips. This would make the checking of a microchip as swift and efficient as possible.
- If a cat becomes lost, is stolen and sold on or abandoned, microchip details will help to locate owners and enable a reunion. If the cat is found injured and taken to a vet, those details will also enable a vet to contact the owners. In the sad case where a cat is found dead, having up-to date microchip details will at least enable the owner to get closure. However, currently there are numerous government-approved microchipping databases operating, along with numerous bogus sites. Since an owner can choose which database to use for their cat, anyone scanning a cat may have to check multiple databases.