Template letter to MPs re compulsory microchip scanning (England only)

* Please adapt this letter and make it as personal as possible; and fill in any gaps (highlighted in yellow)
* Find details of your MP at [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

Dear [insert name]

**Compulsory microchip scanning**

I am writing to you as a veterinary surgeon in your constituency [insert name and location of practice] and a member of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) to express my concerns around proposals for the compulsory microchip scanning of dogs and cats by vets.

There has been some criticism of the veterinary profession from campaigners calling for compulsory scanning. Unfortunately, such campaigns misunderstand the powers of vets and the potential welfare harms of compulsory scanning to both animals and humans. I therefore fully support [BVA’s position on compulsory scanning](https://www.bva.co.uk/media/3745/position-on-microchip-scanning-dogs-and-databases-july-2019.pdf) and strongly oppose proposals to introduce compulsory scanning on animal welfare and public safety grounds.

While it may appear to be a simple task to scan a microchip to check ownership of a pet, there is no central portal and there are now 15 different databases we have to grapple with to find the owner; and individual pets can be registered on more than one database which can lead to heart-breaking ownership disputes.

A survey carried out by BVA in 2019 revealed that the most common reasons why stray dogs could not be reunited with their owners were that the information held on the microchip database had not been kept up to date (68%) and that there was no identifying microchip or collar/tag (22%). For cats, the most common barriers to reunification were no identifier (84%) and out of date details on the microchip database (11%).

I know from my own experience that [give examples where you might have spent a considerable length of time trying to track down an owner; or highlight a high percentage of details that are incorrect on the database; or where an owner dispute may put the safety of one party at risk…]

BVA already recommends that vets scan across a [range of scenarios](https://www.bva.co.uk/media/3745/position-on-microchip-scanning-dogs-and-databases-july-2019.pdf). At our practice, for example, we routinely scan [include what’s relevant in your case, for example…pets that are suspected to be stray, suspected stolen or have been brought in for emergency medical treatment without their owner. We also routinely scan dogs on first presentation to the practice, as well as under a wide range of other circumstances, including prior to euthanasia if we feel it’s appropriate…]. But it’s vital that we’re allowed to exercise our professional judgement as to whether this is appropriate based on the individual circumstances, to safeguard animal health and welfare, and public safety.

The veterinary team plays a crucial role in helping to reunite lost or stolen animals with their owners, but we cannot be expected to take sole responsibility for policing this. There are circumstances surrounding individual cases which present themselves in veterinary practices which sometimes are not clear cut and there will be a need for us to exercise our professional judgement, based on the information available to us. There may be times, for example, where someone is fleeing with their pets from domestic abuse. It is essential that vets are trusted by the public in order to avoid any potential welfare harm.

Campaigns calling for compulsory microchip scanning by vets have gained momentum but I hope this provides a balanced understanding of the issues and that you will be able to support us by putting our case to the Minister.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Include your name and contact details and/or your practice address if you are in practice within the constituency.