

Scanning microchips prior to euthanasia

Dear Sir/Madam,

In 2020, Defra worked with the Tuk's Law campaign and the veterinary profession to provide more assurance that alternatives have been explored prior to the euthanasia of healthy dogs. In doing so, Defra was responding to the concerns expressed by Tuk's Law campaign, whilst acknowledging the veterinary profession's position that requests to euthanise healthy animals are rare in practice.

In 2021, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) amended its Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons to address this issue. Under the revised Code, where the attending vet considers that there are no health or welfare reasons to justify euthanasia, they should scan the microchip and check the relevant compliant database. This allows the vet to consider whether anyone else has declared an interest in the dog, such as a rehoming centre, who might be willing to take it back into its care (often referred to as "rescue back-up"). Having all this information to hand will enable the vet and their client to discuss potential alternatives to euthanasia.

Last year, the RCVS also added these requirements to the potential euthanasia of cats.

Purpose

It has been four years since the RCVS introduced these requirements for dogs. We believe that it is now appropriate to consider how this process has bedded in and as key stakeholders we would like to seek your views. Not all of the following questions may be relevant to you or your organisation and, and so you may wish to only address some of them. Completing this questionnaire is voluntary and we expect that it will take no more than 30 minutes of your time.

Content and Training

Do you consider the wording in sections 8.4 - 8.7 of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct [8. Euthanasia of animals - Professionals](#) as clear enough for vets to understand the requirements?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If 'No' has been selected, please provide additional details.

Could further support be provided to assist vets to deliver these obligations?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If 'Yes' has been selected, what type of support would be most beneficial to help vets deliver their obligations?

- ☐ Face to face training
- ☐ Online training
- ☐ Role play scenarios
- ☐ Written case studies
- ☐ Advice from the practice/employer
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' has been selected, please provide additional details.

Application

Have you experienced challenges when applying the requirements set out in the Code of Professional Conduct?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If 'Yes' has been selected, do these challenges fall under any of the following categories:

- ☐ Compliance with GDPR requirements
- ☐ Issues regarding rescue back up
- ☐ Owner disputes
- ☐ Inability to contact the microchip database and/or find relevant information
- ☐ Employer decisions and/or policies
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' has been selected, please provide additional details.

Have you had any experiences where applying the requirements have resulted in an outcome other than euthanasia?

- ☐ Yes

☐ No

If 'Yes' has been selected, do these outcomes fall under any of the following categories:

- ☐ Rehome with a rescue
- ☐ Referred to a specialist
- ☐ Returned to registered owner: individual
- ☐ Returned to registered owner: rescue
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' has been selected, please provide additional details.

In meeting these requirements, have you sought advice from other organisations?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If 'Yes' has been selected, please state which organisations:

- ☐ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)
- ☐ Veterinary Defence Society (VDS)
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' has been selected, please provide additional details.

Complaints

Have you any comments regarding how complaints about this issue are being handled by the RCVS? Please provide details.

Please send any responses to microchipping@defra.gov.uk by **9th January 2026**. Any responses received after this date will not be analysed. The findings of the questionnaire will remain confidential, and any published data will be aggregated and anonymised.

Alternatively, you can post your response to:

Animal Welfare,
2, Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF

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A large print version of this form can be provided upon request. Please get in touch if you require one.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Annex: Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons

This annex provides the relevant excerpts from the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons.

Where there are no health or welfare concerns

8.4 Veterinary surgeons may face difficulties with the decision where a request is made by a client for the destruction of an animal where in the clinical/professional judgement of the veterinary surgeon destruction of the animal is not necessary. While the veterinary surgeon's primary obligation is to relieve the suffering of an animal, the owner's wishes and circumstances are also relevant. Veterinary surgeons should be mindful that refusing an owner's request for euthanasia may add to the owner's distress and could be detrimental to the welfare of the animal.

8.5 In relation to dogs and cats presented for euthanasia where in judgement of the veterinary surgeon destruction of the animal is not necessary, for instance where there are no health or welfare reasons for the animal to be euthanised, the veterinary surgeon should establish the current keeper's relationship with the animal, which should include scanning for a microchip. If a microchip is found, the relevant database should be checked before carrying out euthanasia. If no microchip is found, this should be recorded on the clinical record.

8.6 Further, veterinary surgeons should note that where the dog or cat in question has been rehomed from a shelter, clients may have a contract such that the dog or cat can be returned to that shelter and so it may be appropriate to discuss this with the client prior to euthanasia. Alternatively, there may be another individual willing to take responsibility for the dog or cat (who may be named on the microchip database), and this may also be discussed with the client.

8.7 In relation to cats, clients may have brought in a healthy cat under the mistaken impression that the cat is a stray. It is therefore important to check whether there is another owner who has responsibility, or is willing to take responsibility, for the cat, who may be named on the microchip database.