It’s the beginning of a New Year! Let’s get started right with our pets. Hello, it’s Shelby again at Antrim Veterinary Hospital. Microchipping is very important to our furry family members, let me tell you why. Pets like to explore their surroundings but what if they explore too far and find themselves unable to get back home? Even an indoor cat may be an escape artist, or heaven forbid a natural disaster such as a tornado, fire, or earth quake leaves you without your home. Your beloved pet may be lost. Having your pet microchipped can drastically increase your chances of finding him/her. Collars and tags can break, be lost, or removed. As tags get old they become hard to read. Tattoos can be difficult to read, covered by hair, fade, or can be altered. A microchip is tamper-proof. Dogs without a microchip have only a 21.9% chance of being returned to their owner but having a microchip increased these odds to 52.2%. Only 1.8% of cats without a microchip are ever found by their owners but 38.5% of cats with a microchip are reunited with their owners.

A microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is placed under the skin between the pet’s shoulder blades. It does not require anesthesia and can be done in a matter of seconds. It is no more painful than having a routine vaccine or injection. Each microchip is encoded with a unique identification number and is permanent once placed. Once the chip is inserted the pet is scanned to ensure proper placement and the identification number is checked. Microchips do not have a battery so there is nothing that needs replaces and they require no maintenance.

There are many different microchip companies. Some have annual fees or fees to update your information. At Antrim we carry PetLink which has only the initial fee at the time of placement. It is a lifetime registration with no renewal fees. It is easy to register and update your information if needed. This information is used to reunite you with your pet if they are ever lost.

Never assume a pet is a stray; this includes cats. If you see a cat or dog wandering please contact your local animal control or police station as a pet may be unpredictable if scared. If you are able to safely secure the animal you may take him/her to your local veterinarian or animal control facility as they will be able to scan the pet for a microchip. Most, if not all, shelters and humane societies have microchip scanners. If you must take the unknown pet home do not introduce it to your own pets for fear of disease transmission or fighting.

Millions of lost pets are taken into shelters each year so make sure your pet is linked in with a microchip. If they have no means of identification it is possible that if the shelter is over capacity that the unthinkable could happen. This could be prevented with a simple microchip. What a wonderful gift to give your 4-legged family member and kick off the New Year.