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MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHICAGO ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL ANNOUNCE NEW PROGRAM TO RETURN LOST ANIMALS TO THEIR HOMES

Program allows animal control officers to use mobile microchip scanners in the community to quickly return stray animals to their home

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Animal Care and Control (CACC) today announced a new initiative that will support the return of lost animals faster while diverting them from the CACC Shelter. Animal control officers (ACO) can now utilize mobile microchip scanners, donated by Best Friends Animal Society and Animal Farm Foundation, to scan lost pets in the community and return them to the corresponding home address without being processed in the city shelter.

“Half of the animals that come through the doors of our shelter are stray animals, and our goal is to return as many of them to their homes as quickly as possible,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Together with our dedicated partners, and committed staff, we can work to return hundreds more pets safely to their families.”

Best Friends Animal Society donated ten microchip scanners to CACC and Animal Farm Foundation donated 50 microchip scanners to the Chicago Police Department; both agencies aid in the return of lost animals. Safe Humane trained the CPD officers on how to use the scanners. There is no additional cost to the city to implement this program.

In April, City Council passed an ordinance introduced by Alderman Edward Burke and Alderman Raymond Lopez that allowed CACC's ACOs and police officers to read the ID tag or scan the animal for a microchip when safe.

For pets to be returned, the owner must reside within a three-mile radius of the site of recovery, the pet must be in good health and the microchip or tag must contain an up-to-date home address. Upon arrival at the owner's location, the ACO will request a photo ID to confirm ownership of the animal. ACOs will also carry educational materials, such as CACC vaccination, microchip, and spay/neuter clinic information, to assist residents when returning animals in the field.

A microchip is an integrated circuit about the size of a grain of rice implanted just under the skin of the animal. The microchip is programmed with an identification number that is read by a microchip scanner. This identification number is registered with the microchip company and all registered microchips are stored in the data base.

“CACC is excited to launch this important initiative to keep more animals in homes and divert them from the city shelter, thanks to critical partners Best Friends Animal Society and Animal Farm Foundation,” said Kelley Gandurski, CACC Acting Executive Director. “We encourage all pet owners to microchip and tag their pets to ensure their pet can return home safely and quickly.”

This program is one of CACC’s “before the door” strategies and a key component in the department’s goal of achieving successful outcomes for as many animals as possible. Even though intake has been steadily decreasing over the last decade, CACC still takes in dozens of animals daily. In 2017, nearly 15,000 animals arrived at CACC. Of those, about half of them were stray (around 3,100 dogs, 3,600 cats and 140 other animals). If just five percent of stray pets could be returned home instead of the shelter, more than 300 fewer animals would enter the city shelter each year.

“We are very pleased that Chicago Animal Care and Control is directing their emphasis on returning stray pets to their owners by implementing the return of pets to their homes in the field,” said Susan Taney, Director of Lost Dogs Illinois. “With 60 percent of CACC’s intake of dogs being strays, this program will help decrease intake, thereby freeing up kennel space for truly homeless animals. This is something Lost Dogs Illinois has been working on since our inception in 2010. Remember, not all shelter dogs need a new home. Many just need to go home.”

CACC’s ACOs started training with the scanners in June and the program formally launched on July 18. From July 18th to August 6, CACC scanned 69 stray dogs and 75 stray cats in the field, but none had microchips. Eight dogs and two cats had microchips, but were brought to the shelter due to illness, injury or because they were unable to be safely scanned in the field.

CACC reminds residents to ensure their pets are wearing a collar and have a microchip with current ownership information. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of its monthly, low-cost and free microchipping, tagging and vaccine clinics. The next clinic will be held [on Wednesday, August 15, at 9 a.m.](#) at Chicago Animal Care and Control, 2741 S. Western, Chicago.

CACC is the city’s only municipally-run, open-admission animal shelter, open to the public 365 days of the year. Its mission is to protect public safety and promote the humane care of animals through sheltering, pet placement, education and animal law enforcement. During its business hours, CACC impounds stray, owner-surrendered and confiscated animals, as well as wildlife.

Find CACC on Facebook @ChicagoAnimalCareandControl, or visit www.cityofchicago.org/cacc.

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