Association welcomes moves for compulsory microchipping in Scotland

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The British Veterinary Association (BVA) has welcomed a Scottish Government consultation on the compulsory microchipping of all dogs in Scotland.

The association, a member of the Microchipping Alliance, has been working with dog welfare organisations and others to promote compulsory microchipping – which is already a legal requirement in Northern Ireland and will become a requirement in Wales in 2015 and in England in 2016 – as a positive dog welfare measure across the whole of the UK.

The consultation, launched by cabinet secretary Richard Lochhead in December, also asks for views on dog licensing and compulsory muzzling of dogs in public areas – measures that BVA has not supported.

BVA president Robin Hargreaves said: "BVA has long supported the compulsory microchipping of all dogs as a significant welfare measure and so we are delighted that the Scottish Government..."
has launched this consultation.

"Every vet in practice will tell you what a highlight it is to be able to reunite a lost dog and its owner quickly and easily. The more dogs that are microchipped, with correct details on the database, the easier that process becomes meaning **fewer dogs sent to kennels and charities.**"

On other proposed measures, Mr Hargreaves said: "We have some **serious reservations** about the call for all dogs, or dogs of a specific breed, to be muzzled in public areas.

"Under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act dogs are afforded the right to exhibit normal behaviour which could be **compromised** by the requirement to wear a muzzle at all times outside of the home. We hope that respondents to the consultation **reject this idea.**"

President of BVA Scottish branch **Ronnie Soutar** called microchipping a "safe, effective and permanent way to link dogs with their owners" and "an **essential part of responsible ownership**".

"It is a small cost in terms of dog ownership with veterinary practices in Scotland offering microchipping at a very reasonable price or at a discount or free as part of a practice promotion," he said.

"It is important to remember that **microchips are only as useful as the information held on the database** and so we must work together with the Scottish Government to ensure that dog owners understand the importance of keeping this information up to date."

The BVA said it will be consulting members to respond in full to the consultation.