

MICROCHIPPING

Adverse events involving microchips: first report from the VMD

THE first annual report from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's (VMD's) Microchip Adverse Event Reporting Scheme shows that a total of 1420 reports were made to the scheme between its launch in April 2014 and the end of December 2015. More than 75 per cent of these were submitted by vets and 84 per cent of the reports involved dogs.

The VMD explains that it delayed writing the annual report because only 28 reports were received by the scheme between April and December 2014. A noticeable increase in the monthly rate of reporting was recorded after it became a legal requirement to report adverse events to microchips in dogs in England in February 2015. Reporting became compulsory in Scotland and Wales in April 2016.

The most common adverse event reported was migration of the microchip (729 reports), followed by failure of the microchip (630 reports); 61 reports described a reaction to the microchip. Of the reports describing migration of the microchip, 674 occurred in dogs, 53 in cats and one each in a tortoise and a rabbit. However, the VMD says that almost 300 of these cases were assessed as being unlikely to be migrations and that in most cases the chip location was within the neck/scapula/shoulder area. In cats, migration of a microchip

was most often detected within a year of implantation. In dogs, most migrations were detected between six months and a year after implantation.

Regarding the reports of failures of microchips, 482 of the 630 reports related to dogs, 145 to cats, two to rabbits and one to a horse. The VMD says that only 56 cases could be regarded as true failures; in these cases it was confirmed that the scanner used was working and the physical presence of a microchip was confirmed using palpation or imaging. Of these cases, implantation dates were not provided for 17 cases, but, for the remaining 39 cases, the most common period to the detection of failure was three to four years after implantation.

Of the reports describing a reaction to a microchip, 39 related to dogs, 21 to cats and one to a rabbit. Most of the reports in dogs described the development of lumps, masses or swellings at the site of implantation. The VMD reports that in five cases the swellings were identified as abscesses, in three cases they were seromas, in two they were lipomas and in one case a haematoma was identified. The time taken for the lumps and swellings to develop after microchip implantation was not known in five cases, but in the others the time varied from immediately to more than six years.

In cats, 11 of the reactions described related to the development of lumps, swellings or a mass. In one of these cases, the microchip was surgically removed with the mass. The cat was rechipped two months later and another mass rapidly developed; this was also removed with the associated microchip.

The affected rabbit developed an abscess at the implantation site, which became necrotic with a mucopurulent discharge.

The VMD points out that it does not currently receive sales information about microchips and cannot estimate the number of animals that have been microchipped; therefore, it is not possible for it to calculate an accurate risk of an adverse event occurring. However, it says, 'considering that there are an estimated 8.5 million dogs and 7.5 million cats in the UK the likelihood of an animal experiencing an adverse event is very low.'

■ 'Microchip Adverse Event Reporting Scheme: review from voluntary to compulsory reporting April 2014 to December 2015' Available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/microchip-adverse-event-reporting-scheme-2015-review

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ANIMAL HEALTH

Flock health clubs to be rolled out across the UK

FOLLOWING a successful trial in the north east and west of England, 'flock health clubs' are to be extended across the UK to help sheep farmers access cost-effective veterinary advice.

The model for the clubs, which are supported by the Sheep Veterinary Society and the National Sheep Association, was developed by Flock Health, a sheep veterinary consultancy business. Fiona Lovatt, a director of the business, explained: 'Sheep farmers really value quality advice given by keen sheep vets, but there is often a belief that it is too costly to get their vet involved. Historically there has been quite a mismatch between the service that vets provide and what their sheep farmer clients are prepared to pay for so, 15 months ago, we set up some

pilot flock health clubs at practices in the north east and west of England.'

The pilot programme indicated that the model was effective – a flock health club is a vet-facilitated sheep farmer discussion group that allows farmers with smaller numbers of sheep to share the cost of veterinary advice while maintaining regular, good quality contact with vets with an interest in sheep. Vets taking part in the pilot programme reported improved relationships with their sheep farmers through more regular contact, an increase in the veterinary involvement on these sheep farms, and a steady sheep income to the practice via monthly club subscriptions from the farmer members.

Dan Stevenson, from LLM Farm Vets in Whitchurch, who was involved in one

of the pilot clubs, said: 'The enthusiasm of our sheep clients for a flock health club was really inspiring to see. At the end of the year the members were unanimous in their wish to keep the group going.'

A series of CPD events is being held during June and July for vets interested in setting up their own clubs. The events will include training in how to start up and run a club within a practice and will provide opportunities to try out various resources for collecting flock performance and farm economic data for group benchmarking. Details of dates and venues are available at www.flockhealth.co.uk/Flock-Health-Clubs

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