

How to Keep Track of Your Dog's Vital Information

By: Joan Paylo ; PetPlace.com

It's important to keep comprehensive records on your dog, just as you do for other family members. Medical and licensing records, as well as adoption or breeding papers, belong in these files. Key information also should be included in an emergency kit with other essential family papers.

If there is a natural disaster, if your pet is missing or if something should happen to you, your dog's records are invaluable. You need to provide them to pet sitters, boarding kennels or a new veterinarian. If you take your dog on a trip out of the country, you'll need them, too. Many foreign countries have strict policies that require an extensive history of your pet's background and health.

Identification

If disaster strikes and a dog is separated from his owner, it's surprising how difficult it is for humans to identify their pets. If your pet has been injured or emotionally traumatized, if she has been kept in a strange place with other animals, she may not immediately recognize you or vocalize as you pass by her kennel. You should have as many ways of identifying your dog as you can.

- **Tags.** Every dog should have a collar tag that states her name, your name, phone number and city. Your address also is recommended.
- **Microchips and tattoos.** Have a microchip implanted in your dog of the brand most widely used in your area. Tattoo identifications are also used, but microchips are considered more reliable. If you choose a tattoo, have the ID placed on the leg and keep a picture of the tattoo and records of all ID procedures.
- **Photos.** Keep recent print and digital photos of your dog in your emergency files. Include photos from various angles that clearly show coat type and coloring, close-ups of the face and any exceptional physical characteristics. In the past few years, shelters in disaster areas have begun posting lost and found pet pictures on the Internet. You might need to post your missing dog's photo online, too.

Proof of Ownership

Pets are classified as property under the law – same as your home, car, jewelry or other precious possessions. Your dog can be lost, injured through someone else's fault, or even stolen.

Ownership records can back up your claim if you go to court.

- **Adoption papers.** If you choose your dog from a shelter, her adoption papers will carry a record of her estimated age, up-to-date vaccinations, sterilization, personality evaluation and all other information known about her. Though these particulars are fresh in your mind when you first bring her home, after several years and several more pets, you can easily confuse such information if it's not written down.
- **Breeding contract.** If you get a purebred dog from a responsible breeder, of course you'll want a record of her sire and dam, as well as inoculation and medical records. If you find a dog through a breed rescue group, their policies may prevent you from tracing her parentage, but you'll still get adoption papers and a certification that she's been spayed. If you own a true show dog, of course, you will keep extensive records on many aspects of your dog's life.
- **Bill of sale.** It's not a good idea to buy your dog from a pet store. But if you do, the bill of sale and its accompanying papers are crucial to your pet's future. If your pet becomes ill after you bring her home, you may have legal recourse under state or local consumer protection laws that require the pet store to pay for necessary medical care. In the saddest scenario, some states have

pet "lemon laws" that allow you to return a wretchedly sick, ill-bred animal to the store for a refund. Needless to say, in such emotional situations, your proof of purchase is crucial.

Medical Records

- Routine medical information. Record your veterinarian's name and emergency number and a history of your dog's inoculations against distemper and rabies, as well as results of her medical check-ups and blood profiles.
- Medications. What heartworm medication does your dog take, and according to what schedule? Does she take any other medicines regularly? Keep a copy of labels from pill bottles or boxes in the file to ensure uniformity in manufacturer and dosage.
- Special needs. Is your dog allergic to medications or any other substances? Does she have serious medical problems that require constant monitoring or treatment? If she's diabetic, how often does she receive insulin? Is she on a special diet? Does she take herbal remedies or anything to prevent motion sickness?

Legal Papers

- Rabies certificate. In regions where rabies is endemic, government health departments can require immunization against this fatal disease. You usually need proof of rabies inoculation when you license your dog or travel by air. As with other ID tags, your dog's rabies tag or her entire collar can be lost, so you should keep the paper certificate you get when she receives her shot on file and easily accessible. If your dog bites someone, that certificate can save her life. The only other way a veterinarian can prove that your dog is rabies-free is to test her brain tissue. If you can't provide paper proof of vaccination, a court could order a vet to euthanize your pet in order to perform such a test.
- Spay/neuter proof. In response to pet overpopulation, some local governments ask for proof that your dog has been spayed or neutered before they will issue you a dog license. Unchecked pet reproduction burdens taxpayers and threatens the public health when unwanted animals roam the streets. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that between 4 and 6 million cats and dogs are euthanized by shelters each year because there aren't enough homes to care for them.
- Dog license. Localities require proof that your dog is licensed. A paper record that matches the number on your dog's license helps you reclaim your dog if she is found by animal control personnel.
- Veterinary insurance policy. If you have pet medical insurance, you'll want to keep the policy close at hand.
- Your will. Many people include clauses in their wills to provide for a pet after they die. The name of the person who has agreed to adopt your pet and any financial support you leave for your pet's care should be noted.

- See more at: <http://www.petplace.com/dogs/how-to-keep-track-of-your-dog-s-vital-information/page1.aspx?>

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