



Veterinary Ireland Media Release – 4th March 2016

DOG MICROCHIPPING – REGISTRATION IS KEY TO SUCCESS OF NEW LAWS

Pet Obesity Highlighted at Veterinary Ireland Companion Animal Society (VICAS) Conference, Galway

150 vets and vet nurses working in the pet care sector were in Galway for the Veterinary Ireland Companion Animal Society (VICAS) Conference (Friday 4th- Sunday 6th March, 2016, Radisson Hotel).

Speaking in Galway, VICAS Chairperson John O'Connor welcomed the new Irish Microchipping of Dogs Regulations which come in to effect for all dogs from 31st March this year; and he also highlighted the increasing prevalence of obesity amongst dogs and cats, encouraging pet owners to seek advice from their vet about managing pet obesity.

New Microchipping Regulations for Dog Owners

“It is now compulsory for all dogs to be microchipped; and there is a new legal obligation on dog owners to make sure that their contact details are registered on a Government-approved microchip database, kept up to date and that they have a certificate to prove it.”

Mr. O'Connor said that other countries have made microchipping compulsory but neglected regulating the registration with the database. As a result up to 50% of stray dogs that are found to be microchipped cannot be reunited with their owner because the contact details were out of date or non-existent.

“This leads to extended upset and anxiety for the dogs and their owners and often leads to wonderful, healthy dogs or much-loved pets being put to sleep or re-homed because their owners cannot be traced,” said Mr. O'Connor.

The month of March 2016 is National Microchipping Month, organised by approved database www.fido.ie and Dogs Trust, to raise awareness about the new laws for dog owners and the animal welfare benefits of microchipping. Owners of dogs that are not microchipped should talk with their vets now and make sure they are legally compliant before the end of the month. Owners of dogs already chipped are invited to check that their details are correctly registered on an approved database free of charge at www.chipcheck.ie.

Mr. O'Connor warned that it is now illegal to buy or take ownership of a puppy that is not microchipped and registered on an approved database and that does not have a Certificate from the database to prove this. All puppies must now be microchipped and registered before the age of 12 weeks - or before they are moved from their birth home.

“After 31st March 2016 everyone who buys a dog, rehomes a dog or gets a gift of a dog should also expect to be asked for photo and address ID so that the dog can be correctly registered to them. Please don't be offended when you are asked, it is in the best interests of the puppies and dogs involved and will make it more difficult for unscrupulous breeders to do business,” said Mr. O'Connor.

50% of Dogs & Cats Overweight or Obese

Mr. O'Connor highlighted that one of the growing problems vets are seeing every day is overweight pets with up to 50% of dogs and cats now considered to be overweight or obese.

“Every day we are understanding more and more about this chronic, incurable disease and although that description may seem a little stark, managing obesity is really no different to say diabetes or asthma,” said Mr. O’Connor. “By seeking advice from your vet, you will be able to very successfully manage this disease and greatly improve the quality of life and longevity of your pet.”

Mr. O’Connor explained that obesity is a disease that involves many factors from environment to lifestyle to hormones to genetics and can arise despite our very best efforts so there is no need to be fearful of asking for advice from your vet. “It is simply another disease requiring treatment that is seen every day in veterinary practice and thankfully is also one of the diseases that can be treated very effectively and without great expense,” said Mr. O’Connor.

Vets Need Support as Guardians of Animal Health & Welfare

Mr. O’Connor said that the pet care sector has weathered the recession storm and is starting to recover but it is a slow recovery. “Vets need the continued support of the public if we are to be the guardians of animal health and welfare into the future,” said Mr. O’Connor.

“As a profession our personal lives will often take a back seat. Typically we focus on attending courses which are clinical or scientific in nature. Therefore I particularly welcomed the session in Galway for both vets and vet nurses by psychologist Dr. Margaret O’Rourke, which was a thought provoking exercise in mindfulness and useful to help refocus our minds on the importance of a healthy balance between our work and personal lives.”

Bounce Back: Building wellbeing and Resilience for Work and Life

‘*Bounce Back: Building Wellbeing and Resilience for Work & Life*’ was the title of the presentation by **Dr. Margaret O’Rourke**, a Chartered practicing Forensic Clinical psychologist, researcher and medical educator.

Speaking in Galway, Dr. O’Rourke said that Veterinary Medicine and Nursing are high pressure professions, with more stresses and demands than most other types of work.

“You need to be in the right head space to make good decisions, maintain positive relationships with the people you live and work with and be fit and flexible when life, work or even the weather throws you a curve ball,” said Dr. O’Rourke.

“Healthy coping, managing stress and ‘bounce back’ after set-backs – that is Resilience. We are not born with it, but it is a skill that anyone can learn,” said Dr. O’Rourke. “Resilience is an essential skill for vets and veterinary nurses because the nature of the jobs means there will always be challenges and set-backs.”

Dr. Margaret O’Rourke has worked on a number of high impact, public safety, child protection, mental health, wellbeing and resilience programmes in the UK, USA and Canada. At the VICAS conference she presented the SAFEVET programme designed to help those in the veterinary profession to build and maintain resilience to help to manage the ups and downs of practice.

Conference Proceedings

Animal behaviour, neurology (including pet epilepsy), gastroenterology (including pet food allergies) and dermatology were amongst the subjects under the spotlight at the VICAS conference in Galway’s Radisson Hotel (Friday 4th- Sunday 6th March, 2016). Expert speakers included:

- **Dr. Clare Rusbridge** BVMS PhD DipECVN MRCVS RCVS and European Specialist in Veterinary Neurology, works at University of Surrey and with Fitzpatrick Referrals, with “*SuperVet*” or “*Bionic Vet*” Noel Fitzpatrick.
- **Dr. Edward J. Hall**, MA, Vet MB, PhD, DipECVIM-CA, MRCVS, Professor of Small Animal Medicine and Deputy Head of Bristol University’s Veterinary School.
- **Dr. Rory Breathnach**. a member of the Advisory Committee on Veterinary Medicines (Health Products Regulatory Authority) and the Committee for Veterinary Medicinal Products (European Medicines Agency). He teaches various aspects of small animal internal medicine, toxicology and dermatology at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in UCD.
- **Andrea Dineen** graduated as a veterinary surgeon, holds a Masters (MVM) and lectures in Vet Nursing focusing on the areas of Ethics, Nursing Process & Models, & Research Methodology for Vet Nurses.
- **Sandra Nicholson** MVB MRCVS MSc AABT Lectures in Veterinary nursing at University College Dublin

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