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26/15 **photos to follow**

20<sup>th</sup> February 2015

### **MINISTER COENEY ANNOUNCES LEGISLATION ON COMPULSORY DOG MICROCHIPPING**

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney T.D, today announced arrangements for compulsory dog microchipping. The dog microchipping programme will be rolled out on a phased basis, beginning with pups in September 2015 and will be expanded to all dogs in March 2016.

Minister Coveney said *“widespread Microchipping of all dogs will have a number of positive benefits. It will provide a basic tool to protect the welfare of all dogs and assist with speedily uniting stray dogs with their owners.” Furthermore he said “it will act as a deterrent for those who abandon dogs and assist in identifying marauding dogs and those that pose a threat to livestock or people.”*

Microchipping will also have an added benefit to owners wishing to take animals out of the country as a microchip is also required for a dog passport, which is needed when moving a dog out of the State. If dogs are already microchipped this will reduce the cost associated with getting a passport.

The Minister said that many responsible owners have already had their dogs microchipped and the vast majority of these will be compliant with the new regulations which will require that the microchip used be ISO compliant and that the microchip details are registered on a database. The Minister added *“it is important that dog owners ensure that the registered details are up to date and correct so that if their dog is lost they can be contacted.”*

The Minister welcomed the fact that the cost of the implanting of microchips and data registration services has been falling, further helped by the economies of scale that the new compulsory scheme will undoubtedly bring. With regard to the disadvantaged in society who own a dog, quite a number of subsidised micro chipping initiatives have been introduced by a number of animal welfare charities.

In light of the need to help keep the cost as affordable as possible there are provisions for microchipping and registration to be carried out in particular circumstances by trained people other than veterinarians. Furthermore, there are initiatives which help to subsidise microchipping for those of restricted means.

Concluding, the Minister took the opportunity to remind dog owners that *“dog ownership brings with it a variety of responsibilities to protect the welfare of the animal and to ensure it is appropriately fed, sheltered, exercised and provided with veterinary care. Microchipping and registration is merely one of a number of actions that any responsible dog owner should undertake. Vaccination and neutering are important to protect and enhance levels of dog welfare in Ireland”*.

**NOTE FOR EDITORS:**

An extensive public consultation process on the legislation had taken place which a variety of organisations and individuals had contributed to.

**Private Databases**

The legislative approach adopted follows practice in NI whereby dogs must be chipped and registered with one of a number of approved private databases. A new national database is not desirable due to the cost of new IT systems, nor is it necessary as this would merely duplicate existing services provided by existing private databases already operating in the marketplace.

Databases will be required to be part of europetnet.ie, which acts as a clearing house for searches of microchip numbers. Other standards relate to their reunification service, suitable IT security and architecture and especially robust procedures around registration of new dogs and change of ownership. In relation to change of ownership sign off by both seller and purchaser will be needed. This is designed to ensure a high level of accountability in dog ownership and make sure that the registered owner details are up to date and correct. This is important as the risk of rabies or other diseases has increased with greater movements of people and animals.

**ENDS**