

Dear Friends,

I wanted to address an issue that has come up recently regarding Microchip Scans for lost pets during our after-hours emergency service. Traditionally, we have tried to accommodate these scans as a service to the community to try and help pets with a microchip find their way home. Over the last two years, we have had a tremendous increase in the demand for our emergency service because fewer and fewer veterinary practices are offering after hours emergency services of their own. What this has meant is that Southside is now taking emergencies from not only San Angelo but an area extending to the Big-Bend area west, north to Abilene (even though there is an emergency clinic in Abilene) and east to beyond Brownwood/Brady and South to Del Rio. This is a statewide issue that is not only affecting the Concho Valley. Recently, we have tried to send especially critical patients to Austin and San Antonio only to find that the emergency clinics did not have the personnel available to take the emergencies

While microchip scans may seem like a simple task, that is only the case when you do not find a microchip. If you do find a chip it can take hours of back and forth conversation and On-hold time with the microchip company, the person who found the pet and eventually the pet owner to bring the process to a closure. Unfortunately, this is time that we just do not have. With a shortage of veterinarians and support staff we only have one veterinarian and often only one technician at the clinic at a given time. When these folks are involved in seeing patients, performing surgical procedures as well as providing care to the patients that are hospitalized, it takes away from our medical responsibilities to provide these scans. We attempted, for a short time, to provide the scan with a phone number to microchip companies but because most of the companies will not give out personal information to private citizens we became the brunt of anger and frustration when folks could not get the problem resolved by calling themselves.

We did not come to the conclusion of ending the microchip scans in a flippant or haphazard manner. We have been discussing and attempting different solutions to the problem now for several years. Finally, we made the decision to end the service because we felt the service was taking away from our primary objective of providing quality emergency care for San Angelo and the surrounding areas. In the future we would encourage citizens that have an ordinance requiring pets to have microchips (such as San Angelo) to speak with city officials regarding positive ways that the city can support its citizenry regarding this issue. Thank you for allowing Southside to provide care for all of your 4-legged friends!

Sincerely,

Drs. Flanagan and White and the Southside Staff