

## Herp and Reptile Identification Without Microchips

### **Are there other ways to identify your reptile?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

Other than microchipping an iguana or chameleon, is there any other way to mark them to distinguish them, keeping in mind that they shed?

For other methods of identification, tattoos are not utilized, as normal ecdysis will result in the tattoo ink eventually being shed off with normal skin. In some species, notching of the ears is utilized as a method of identification, but because we are dealing with species with no ear flaps (these are called pinnae) that method is out.

With chelonians, some people employed the method of notching the shell, but this should not be performed due to the risk of infection. Chelonians can have identification painted onto the shell with a nontoxic paint, but this needs to be reapplied from time to time as it flakes off or fades. The diligent owner needs to notice when it is time to reapply the ID.

I'm afraid that there aren't many safe, permanent, successful ways to permanently identify a herp, short of using microchips. One method that I have read of is by taking a close-up photo of a portion of the herp, as each have a unique pattern of scales, scutes and such. Keeping a digital photo gallery of each herp provides a unique identification that should prove useful.

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### **Need a Herp Vet?**

If you are looking for a herp-knowledgeable veterinarian in your area, a good place to start is by checking the list of members on the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarian (ARAV) web site at [www.arav.com](http://www.arav.com). Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.