

Examples of marking methods for use during a dog vaccination campaign

Courtesy of World Animal Protection

Marking vaccinated dogs can act as advertising for the campaign whilst it is underway, and allows an assessment of the vaccination coverage afterwards. Selection of an appropriate marking device for a campaign depends on cost, effectiveness, safety of the method for the person applying the marking, the length of time marking is required for and the accessibility of the method. Local knowledge can be very helpful for developing cost-effective and appropriate methods.

It is important to first understand the primary objective and then decide what added value can be achieved with different options. An assessment of the local context (see the questions below) can allow the pros and cons of each method to be assessed, then dependent on resources and what is available in the local market come up with the best solution that adds as much value as possible to the primary requirement:

1. Rank the reasons for marking
 - So authority can determine animals vaccination status
 - So the community is aware that the dog is safe
 - To encourage the community to buy in to the campaign
 - To enable the vaccination team to estimate the % coverage achieved through statistical evaluation after vaccination campaign
2. How long is the marking required to last?
 - Short term
 - One year
 - Permanent
3. Who are the target audience and their level of responsibility towards their dogs. This will enable some assessment to be made as to the risks of using collars on growing dogs.
 - Un-owned
 - Owned free roaming
 - Owned semi confined
 - Appropriately confined
4. What would attract the owners / community to the selected marking scheme and are there any disincentives?
 - Aesthetics
 - Cultural norms (positive and negative)
 - Practical threats (e.g. snagging hunting dogs)
5. What is the most cost effective material available in the local market that is fit for purpose
 - Twisted nylon string (many colours available & very cheap)
 - Nylon webbing / strapping (soft) used for belts and straps for bags etc. There are numerous thickness and grades with many options for colours and branding. Also options for putting in buckle and ability to adapt length. This adds cost.
 - Commercial strapping bands for securing cartons these are locked with a metal crimp which requires a purpose designed tool
 - Microchips & reader
 - Ear notching
 - Tattoo / branding
 - Paint/ colour marking

1) **Spray paints and dyes** are useful for very quickly and cheaply marking dogs after a vaccination campaign. Water-based paints will ensure that the skin is not damaged. Depending on the quality of the paint, the length of time that the dog is marked may be quite variable. Care should be taken to assess whether it is acceptable for owned dogs to be spray painted during a campaign.

2) **Collars** are a low-cost and effective method for the visual identification of dogs that have been recently vaccinated; governments can change the collar colour each year to readily identify dogs needing an updated vaccination. There are some drawbacks to using collars though. If the dog is owned and friendly, the collar can be easily removed, or the collar can be easily lost or stolen. Non-adjustable collars are not suitable for young dogs, who could choke as their necks grow. Poorly-made collars can also cause choking if loose or frayed parts get caught on external objects.

Some types of collars include:

- **Rope collars:** These collars are constructed very simply and cheaply from nylon rope, but they are quite effective and are easy to adjust around a dog's neck. Care must be taken that any fringes or stray ends are removed, which could make the dog susceptible to getting ensnared or caught in external objects or becoming a plaything for other dogs.



(Rope collar)

- **Flat, nylon, adjustable collars:** While more expensive than other options, the best and safest collar includes the soft, flexible nylon collar that can be easily adjusted. This collar is equipped with a buckle or plastic (quick-release) snap closure and has a ring for attaching a leash or ID tags. It is important that the collar fit comfortably on the dog so as not to choke the animal or allow it to slip out of the collar.



(Flat, nylon, adjustable collar)

- Crimp collars: While more dangerous for long-term use, these collars are very cheap, easy-to-handle, difficult-to-lose, and are easily adjustable to fit a variety of neck sizes. However, the non-malleable material can possibly cut or choke the dog. Caution must be used then when using them on un-owned or young dogs.



(Crimp collar)

- Collars with a tag: These collars are similar to the crimp collar except that the tag identifies the dog's vaccination date and ownership status. However, other animals can easily remove the tags by chewing on them, and the printed information on the tag itself can be worn or weathered away after long-term exposure to the outdoors.



(Collars with tags)

3) Permanent marking devices

Permanent marking devices may also be used but are generally more expensive or require more extensive handling of the animal. These methods include micro-chipping, freeze-marking, ear-tipping and tattoos and do not permit easy identification of vaccination dates without re-capture of the animal. Micro-chipping can also be quite costly because of the specialized machines that are required for reading. Because the microchips are not visible externally, people may not be aware that they have chips, limiting their applicability when used for vaccination identification.