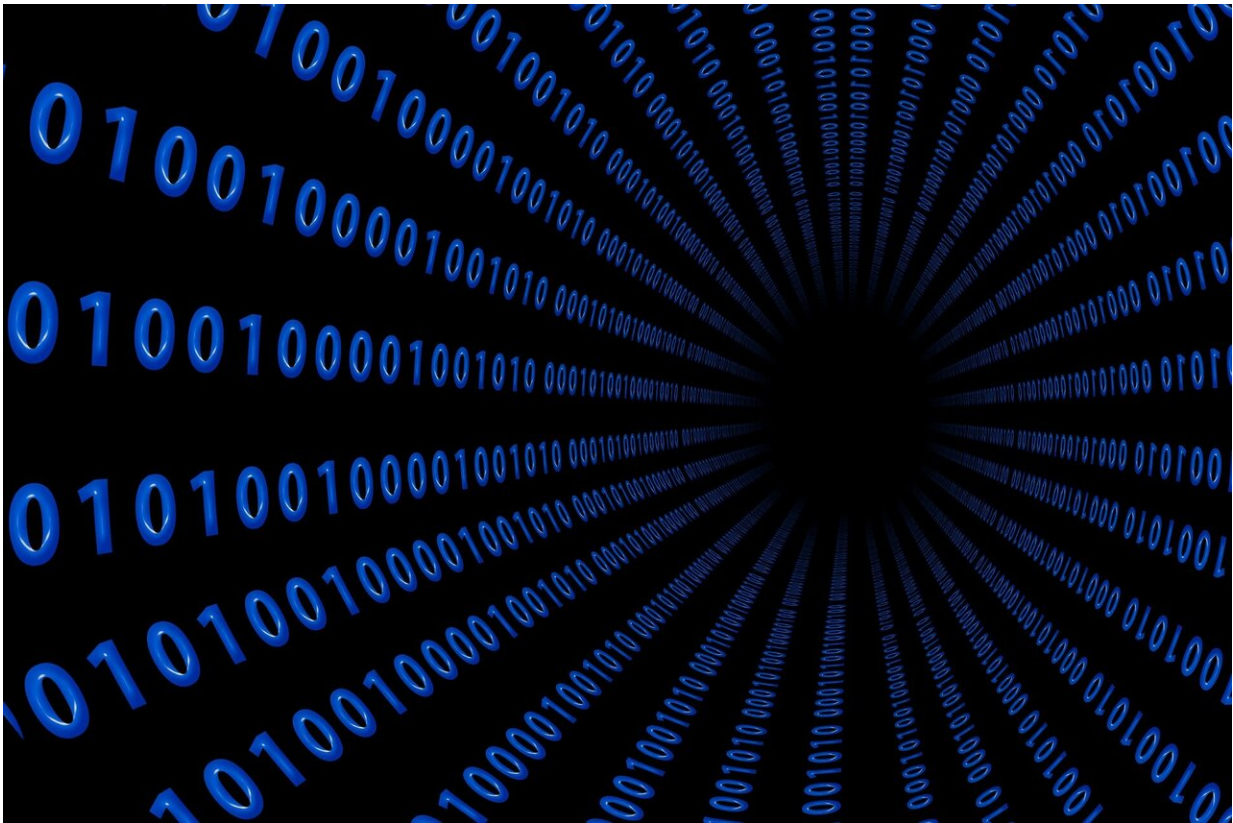


# Canine-9-9: UK police set up dog DNA database

June 23 2021

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Dog theft was the scourge of the coronavirus lockdown across Britain. Now a police force is doing something about it—by setting up a canine DNA database.

Gloucestershire Police in western England said Wednesday it was the first force in the world to store the unique genetic marker to help probe reported thefts and return pets to their owners.

Britain—renowned as a nation of dog lovers—saw an explosion in calls to the emergency number 999 about dog thefts when the pandemic hit last year.

Demand for four-legged companions surged and prices for puppies, but also older dogs, sky-rocketed, attracting not only greedy breeders but also opportunistic thieves and organised criminal gangs.

"Dog [theft](#) can have a massive impact on the owner and their families as dogs are often seen as [family members](#)," said temporary chief inspector Emma MacDonald.

"As a force we are committed to doing all that we can to prevent dog thefts from happening."

Under the scheme, known as DNA Protected, a swab of the dog's DNA is taken from its mouth and stored on an external database accessible to [police](#) around the country to establish whether a dog is lost or stolen.

Owners can provide samples from their pets by buying a £74.99 (\$105, 88-euro) mouth swab kit before submitting it for storage. An advertising drive is also being planned.

All of the force's service [dogs](#) have been profiled, said MacDonald.

Chris Allen, head of forensic services at Gloucestershire Police, said: "DNA is unique and a fact that has enabled forensic services to identify criminals for many years.

"With the application of the same processes used for human identification, the DNA Protected [service](#) promises a searchable database of canine DNA information."

Gloucestershire police and crime commissioner Chris Nelson called dog theft "one of the most distasteful elements of lockdown".

"We have to adopt whatever means we can to stop this shocking trade and hopefully advances in science will help," he added.

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