

Don't Fall For Internet Puppy Scams

ASPCA warns potential dog owners against false or misleading puppy ads online.

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Online scammers are targeting potential dog owners with lures of pictures of purebred puppies and "free to good homes" ads. According to the Internet Crime Complaint Center, hundreds of complaints are filed each year by victims of these puppy scams. In response, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is warning individuals interested in buying a dog to be very careful when looking online.

"The best way to avoid being scammed is to simply never buy a dog you haven't met in person," says Cori Menkin, Esq., Senior Director of Legislative Initiatives for the ASPCA. "Internet scammers lure people with cute pictures of cuddly puppies, but the Internet is a vast, unregulated marketplace. People need to do their homework before they decide to get a pet through the Internet."

To help potential dog owners avoid being scammed, the ASPCA offers the following tips: Check references, including others who have purchased pets from a specific breeder, and the veterinarian the breeder works with. Never send Western Union or money order payments. Always visit. Reputable breeders and rescue groups will be more than happy to offer you a tour. (For a worksheet to take to interview a breeder, [click here](#).) Beware if you are told that there will be no refunds for a sick puppy. A reputable breeder or rescue group will always take the puppy back, regardless of the reason. Pick your puppy up at the kennel. Do not have the puppy shipped or meet at a random location.

If you feel you have been a victim of a puppy scam, contact the Internet Crime Complaint Center and the Better Business Bureau.