

## Beware of Puppy-Selling Scams

**The AKC and Better Business Bureau say puppy-selling scams are being reported across the U.S.**

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The American Kennel Club and the Council of Better Business Bureaus are warning consumers about scams targeting potential puppy buyers.

Both the AKC and the CBBB say they have recently received a number of reports from consumers throughout the United States who have lost money after responding to online or newspaper classified advertising.

Commonly, the scammer, posing as a breeder, will place an ad offering free or inexpensive puppies. Communicating solely through e-mails, the scammer may claim that he or she is affiliated with a religious organization and is being relocated to a foreign country and needs to find the puppies new homes.

“The consumer can be taken in by the sincerity of the scammer, who’ll say that they don’t care about money and just want to find a good home for their beloved puppies. But then the fees for shipping the pet mount up and the consumer can lose hundreds of dollars before realizing they’ve been conned and will never get their puppy,” says CBBB spokesman Steve Cox.

“This is certainly not the only scam to be aware of, but it is a common one,” says AKC spokesperson Lisa Peterson.

“Because of the emotional investment, consumers are more vulnerable to being taken advantage of when it comes to a cute cuddly puppy than with any other purchase. Take time to educate yourself on the hallmarks of a legitimate and responsible breeder,” Peterson said.

The AKC and BBB offer the following advice:

Do your research. Ask if the breeder is a member of a breed club and contact that club to verify membership or check recent listings of available AKC Litters from breeders at the AKC’s website. You can also check with the BBB to see if there are any complaints about the breeder. Request references and speak to other people who have purchased dogs from this breeder — especially if the breeder does not live near you.

Beware of breeders who seem overly concerned with getting paid. Any reputable breeder will be far more concerned with the appropriateness of the potential pet home than what and when they are getting paid. Make sure you have clear expectations — ideally in writing — of how and when the puppy will be paid for. Be especially wary of any breeder who insists that you wire money and who calls to ask for more money to be wired to cover last-minute shipping fees.

Don’t be fooled by a slick website. Unscrupulous dog breeders and even outright scams can be represented by professional-looking websites that lure you in with fraudulent pictures of adorable puppies. At the very least speak with the dog breeder on the telephone and ideally meet the breeder, the puppy and the puppy’s parents in person.

Take your time. Beware of breeders who claim to have multiple puppies ready to ship immediately. It’s unlikely that your perfect puppy will be available for shipping on the very day you call.

Report a scam. Anyone who has experienced a dog-related scam should report it to their local authorities as well as their local Better Business Bureau. Consumers can also direct questions and concerns to AKC Customer Service at 919-233-9767, or e-mail [info@akc.org](mailto:info@akc.org).