

Pet - Fraud Alert

The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) and Action Fraud have recently noticed a rise in the reporting of pets, and in particular puppies and kittens, being advertised for sale via popular online auction websites. The fraudsters will place an advert of the pet for sale, often claiming that the pet is currently held somewhere less accessible or overseas. Upon agreement of a sale, the suspect will usually request an advance payment by money transfer or bank transfer. However, the pet does not materialise and the fraudster will subsequently ask for further advanced payments for courier charges, shipping fees and additional transportation costs. Even if further payments are made, the pet will still not materialise as it is likely to not exist.

Tips to staying safe when purchasing pets:

- Stay within auction guidelines.
- Be cautious if the seller initially requests payment via one method, but later claims that due to 'issues with their account' they will need to take the payment via an alternative method such as a bank transfer.
- Consider conducting research on other information provided by the seller, for example a mobile phone number or email address used by the seller could alert you to any negative information associated with the number/email address online.
- Request details of the courier company being used and consider researching it.
- Agree a suitable time to meet face-to-face to agree the purchase and to collect the pet. If the seller is reluctant to meet then it could be an indication that the pet does not exist.
- A genuine seller should be keen to ensure that the pet is going to a caring and loving new home. If the seller does not express any interest in you and the pet's new home, be wary.
- If you think the purchase price is too good to be true then it probably is, especially if the pet is advertised as a pure-breed.
- Do not be afraid to request copies of the pet's inoculation history, breed paperwork and certification prior to agreeing a sale. If the seller is reluctant or unable to provide this information it could be an indication that either the pet does not exist or the pet has been illegally bred e.g. it originates from a 'puppy farm'. A 'puppy farm' is a commercial dog breeding enterprise where the sole aim is to maximise profit for the least investment. Commercial dog breeders must be registered with their local authority and undergo regular inspections to ensure that the puppies are bred responsibly and are in turn fit and healthy. Illegally farmed puppies will often be kept in inadequate conditions and are more likely to suffer from ailments and illnesses associated with irresponsible breeding.
- When thinking of buying a pet, consider buying them in person from rescue centres or from reputable breeders.
- If you have been affected by this, or any other type of fraud, report it to Action Fraud by visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling **0300 123 2040**.