



Media Statement

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Puppy buyers scammed by bogus online ads

Consumer Protection is concerned about a sharp increase in the number of recent reports of puppy buyers who have been scammed by bogus online advertisements.

In the past 2 months, nine WA consumers have reported losing between \$350 and \$1,800 each after being asked to send money to purchase a puppy that doesn't exist. A total of almost \$9,000 has been traced to cyber criminals in Cameroon in western Africa.

These sales are being generated by listings placed on various classified advertising websites.

Commissioner for Consumer Protection Anne Driscoll said that buyers of puppies are especially vulnerable as they can also have an emotional investment in the pet.

"The financial loss suffered by puppy scam victims can be substantial, but many are also upset and disappointed when the pet they fell in love with on the internet doesn't arrive," Ms Driscoll said.

"After the initial purchase price for the puppy is sent, usually by wire transfer, the scammers then demand extra payments for transport and delivery or insurance, giving a variety of excuses for the extra charges. This is referred to as an advance fee fraud or puppy scam.

"The purchaser is virtually being held to ransom and the heartless scammers are preying on the buyer's emotional attachment to the puppy and their excitement about its imminent arrival. The scam has also offered other pets including exotic birds.

"It is not until after the money is lost that the purchaser discovers that they have been scammed by the use of professional-looking documents and certificates to support the sale.

"Buyers of pets online are advised to be cautious when purchasing puppies sight unseen from strangers, especially if the seller requests money to be sent by wire transfer, which is unable to be recovered once collected.

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Commerce**
Consumer Protection

“If you have any suspicions, don’t go ahead with the deal and don’t reveal any personal information. While there are legitimate sellers of puppies on websites, buyers should try to independently verify the seller’s identity and credentials before sending any money or giving credit card details.”

Consumers can check with the Canine Association of WA whose website www.dogswest.com has a list of registered breeders.

Consumers who are suspicious of the authenticity of online buyers or sellers, should contact WA ScamNet at Consumer Protection on **1300 30 40 54** or **consumer@commerce.wa.gov.au** More information on scams can be sourced at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/wascamnet .

END OF RELEASE

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