

The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



Looking Out for Pets

Number 11 in a series of notes on important issues.

Many of us share our homes and our lives with dogs and cats. Some of us have both, perhaps even more than one. They provide companionship and enrich our lives. Not for nothing have we been described as a nation of pet lovers. Criminals know this and have devised ways in which to use our love of pets to defraud us. What follows comes from advice issued by Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau.

We are particularly vulnerable when we decide to buy a new puppy or kitten. Of course, we are looking for the best. We probably have a picture in our minds of the exact puppy or kitten we would like to find. It may look like one of those adorable pets that feature in television advertisements. We then discover that our dream pet is likely to be expensive and perhaps difficult to find. We are possible victims for fraudsters.

Using online auction websites, fraudsters advertise pets for sale claiming that the pets are somewhere far off, perhaps overseas. When a sale is agreed, an advance payment will be requested. The pet does not however arrive and further advance payments will be requested for 'courier charges', 'shipping fees' or 'additional transportation costs'. Even if these further payments are made, the pet will not arrive. It probably does not exist.

The official advice is very clear. Any variation from the auction guidelines such as a request for payment by an alternative method like a bank transfer serves us as a warning. We must also do our own research by asking for things like inoculation history, breed paperwork and certification because the absence of these is an indicator that the pet does not exist or has been illegally bred. Animals that have been bred illegally may have been kept in inadequate conditions and are more likely to be unfit.

An internet search for a telephone number or e-mail address may reveal negative information about it such as association with dubious activity in the past. It is also possible to research a courier company proposed by the seller although it will be much better to agree a face-to-face meeting at which the pet can be seen, the purchase agreed and the pet collected. If such a meeting is refused or impossible, particularly if the seller shows no interest in whether the pet is going to a caring new home, this is a clear sign that all may not be as it seems.

As always, a deal that seems to be too good to be true probably is, particularly if the pet is advertised as a 'pure-breed'. Heartbreak and financial loss can be avoided by dealing with genuine sellers that do not hide in the shadows. If they are reputable commercial dog breeders, registered with and checked by a local authority, that can provide peace of mind. A rescue centre you can visit provides another alternative.

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