

## Woman scammed out of almost \$6k buying puppy warns others to be vigilant against fake ads

Thu 13 Oct 2016,

### **A consumer group is warning people to be vigilant against puppy breeder scams, after a Perth woman was conned out of almost \$6,000.**

Consumer Protection WA spokeswoman Lanie Chopping, told 720 ABC Perth that when the weather starts to turn warm, people start to search for a puppy to motivate them to get more active outdoors.

Ms Chopping said unfortunately scammers are aware of this seasonal trend, and fake puppy ads and websites appear.

"Spring comes around, people think 'lets get fit, lets get to the park, lets get a puppy to motivate us'," Ms Chopping said.

"Unfortunately scammers come out at the same time to take money off people.

"What we see with these scams is that they are usually based around whatever breeds are popular at the moment."

Sarah Vardy lost \$5,900 after she tried to buy a puppy from a classified website.

Ms Vardy wanted a cavoodle, which is a King Charles cavalier crossed with a poodle, for her daughter's 16th birthday.

She wanted this particular breed as it was a smaller non-shedding dog, better for people with allergies.

"It was a spur of the moment purchase, and with hindsight I should have researched more," she said.

Ms Vardy said she contacted what she thought was a breeder on the website Trading Post who was selling cavoodle puppies.

"It should have been my first red flag, when a different person from the name on trading post ad emailed me back," she said.

"She said she only wanted the dog to go to a good home, and asked questions about me as well ..and that in itself she was very convincing. "

"I sent money through to her bank account - \$1,100 for the puppy and transport to Perth as the 'breeder' was based

interstate."

Ms Vardy said she then got a call from the shipping company, saying we needed more money for immunisation for the puppy and insurance, totalling more than \$1,800.

She was then asked for another \$3,000 for a climate-controlled crate for the dog to go on the plane, that needed to be paid urgently, or she would not get the puppy.

"By then I thought 'hang on a moment, so I rang them up and said 'look, can you guarantee I'm going to get the puppy?'; they assured me I would get the puppy and the money back. As soon as I transferred the money for the crate, I knew I had been scammed."

"It's so easy to do, and you feel like, 'how could I be so silly?'

"There never was a puppy, even though they sent photos of cavoodles through, and they sent me an ABN, because that is what I asked for, which turned out to be a false ABN, of a company that had nothing to do with it at all.

"They did everything right to convince me it wasn't a scam."

Ms Chopping said scammers used emotional manipulation techniques to convince potential buyers.

"There are so many ways they weasel there way into your heart, they put Sarah on the back foot straight away, by making it seem like she might not be the best home for the puppy to go to," she said.

"It's an emotional manipulation, you forget about your concerns, and instead you focus on convincing people you are a worthy owner. And then once you are told you can have the puppy, you feel like you've won something and get an endorsement."

### Puppy scam red flags

Ms Chopping said the key indicators it might be a puppy scam are:

- usually a popular breed advertised on classified websites
- complications soon arise
- scammers often use free email servers, which are harder to trace than those with an ISP email account

Ms Chopping said the bank transferring Ms Vardy's money had frozen the accounts of the scammer, so she might get some or all of her money back.

She said people looking to buy a puppy should contact the relevant breeder association in their state.

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