



National Fraud
Intelligence Bureau



Online Pet Fraud

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Reference 20200514

FRAUD ALERT

Online Pet Fraud



Summary

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Fraudsters take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to commit Pet Fraud within the online sale of animals.

524 reports were made to Action Fraud in April 2020 in relation to Pet Fraud, with the total loss of £229,691. This is nearly six times as many reports as in April 2019.

The fraudster will advertise puppies and kittens for sale on social media platforms and selling platforms, including websites dedicated to pet sale. The victim will be asked to pay a deposit to secure the purchase. The fraudster will not let the pet be collected in person due to the lockdown, and will insist on shipping the pet to the victim's address. After the initial payment has been made, more funds will be requested to cover delivery costs, pet insurance or vaccinations. Each time the funds are sent another request will come.

What you need to do

Crime prevention advice to be delivered to potential pet buyers:

- **Do your research** - Before purchasing anything online, including pets, look up reviews for the site, or person you are buying from. If you are still not sure, ask a trusted friend or family member for their advice.
- **Trust your instinct** - If you cannot physically go to see the animal in person, ask for a video call. If the seller declines, challenge them on why. If you have any suspicions, do not go ahead with the purchase.
- **Choose your payment method wisely** – If you decide to go ahead with the purchase, avoid paying by bank transfer which offers you little protection if you become a victim of fraud. Instead, use a credit card or a payment service such as PayPal.

For more information about how to protect yourself online, visit
www.cyberaware.gov.uk and takefive-stopfraud.org.uk

Every Report Matters

If you have been a victim of fraud or cyber crime, report it to us at Actionfraud.police.uk, or by calling 0300 123 2040.