

# Fraud alert: Internet puppy purchase scams rising



(BPT) - That cold, wet nose. Those adorable little paws. The undeniable sweet scent of puppy breath. You have a soft spot for dogs and have your eye on a rare breed.

After months of looking, you see an online advertisement with the perfect puppy. The seller doesn't live in your area though (could be a different state or even a different country). You send them an email and they seem nice enough. You decide to take the leap and put money down on your new dog.

The seller states they don't take checks or credit cards and requests a money transfer. After paying for the puppy, the seller requests additional fees for vaccination and safe transportation. You send more money without hesitation because you want a healthy puppy arriving safely to your home as soon as possible.

You wait for your new pup's arrival and nothing happens. You try to contact the seller and get no response. The puppy you were so excited to receive never arrives and you realize you have become a victim of a scam. The criminal tricked you out of a lot of money, which stings just as bad as not getting the dog.

## Avoiding fraud

Law enforcement and fraud organizations get reports of puppy scams like this across the country. People become emotionally invested in getting the dog of their dreams, which causes them to put their guard down and criminals take advantage of this vulnerability. If you are considering purchasing a puppy online, it's important to proceed with caution.

## Requests money transfers

[Western Union](#) is a great way to send money to family and friends, but should not be used for sending money to an individual for any type of online purchase. Additionally, never send a money transfer to someone you have not met in-person.

## Offers cheap and quick shipment

A fraudster may offer to ship a puppy from an international location to your doorstep for \$250 or \$350. The International Pet and Animal Transportation Association ([www.IPATA.org](http://www.IPATA.org)) says generally it costs more to ship a puppy internationally than it does for a person to fly; and there are other expenses, such as kennels, a veterinarian, etc. You can never expect to pay only \$250-\$350 for an international shipment. If the seller says

they will ship the pet within 24 hours of payment, don't move forward with the purchase. This fast of a shipment is impossible due to the time it takes to get an import license (if overseas) and veterinary health certificates.

### **Asks for more money or makes threats**

If you send money and then a "problem" occurs, beware. IPATA notes a person might say additional funds are needed for a crate, insurance, health inspection, etc. If you don't pay, they may threaten legal charges for animal abandonment. Don't fall victim. This is just another way to get you to send more money.

### **Avoids providing background information**

If the person is claiming to be a breeder, ask for breeder registration information and verify it, suggests [Embrace Pet Insurance](#). If they don't provide it or make up excuses, walk away.

### **Avoids offering references**

Just like any other good business, references should be available for clients should they want them. Request these from the seller and call them to verify other people's experiences. If they don't have any, don't make the purchase.

### **Only sends a few photos**

If you only receive a few photos of the animal, it's a red flag. Ask for more photos and request them to be taken with a specific item, such as a tennis ball or recent newspaper, suggests Embrace Pet Insurance.

### **A caring persona**

Remember, criminals are savvy and can be very convincing. They will ask questions in order to appear like they are concerned about where the puppy will go. IPATA says they may even call the puppy their "baby" or "child" and send you guidelines for care.

Don't be tricked by a caring persona. Do your due diligence. Check the background of a seller with the American Kennel Club ([www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)). If you can't see a puppy in person, make sure you research extensively and proceed with caution for any online purchase.

For more information about online fraud and how scammers are constantly changing their tactics, visit [wu.com/fraudawareness](http://wu.com/fraudawareness).