

The demand for puppies has been growing in recent years and soaring during the pandemic. In response, more and more commercial and non-commercial breeders are selling puppies online.

However, not all sellers are responsible breeders. Some sellers are puppy dealers operating on a commercial scale without ever registering as such. They pretend to be hobby breeders, while selling multiple breeds of dogs, some of which have been illegal imported. These puppies have been bred in terrible conditions, removed from their mothers too early and transported hundreds of miles to be sold online without the necessary vaccines, documents, and registration. This is called illegal puppy trade.

When puppies from the illegal puppy trade are advertised online, there can be multiple risks for the potential new owners including health, emotional, financial, legal and fraud risks.



About FOUR PAWS

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded by Heli Dungler and friends in Vienna in 1988, the organisation focuses on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With sustainable campaigns and projects, such as its own sanctuaries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term protection for suffering animals.

Learn more about our
Cute Quick Sick campaign here:



FOUR PAWS International
VIER PFOTEN International –
gemeinnützige Privatstiftung

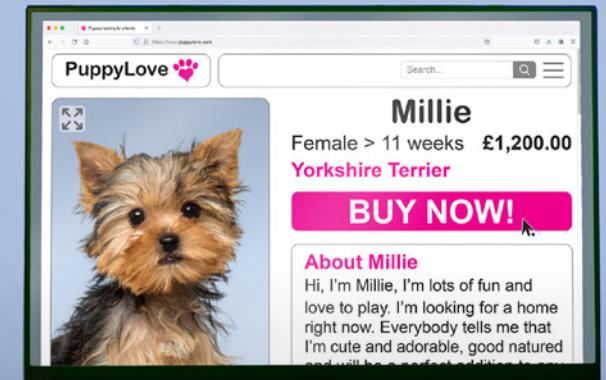
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Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.



10 anti-fraud measures to combat the illegal puppy trade online



What can you do to combat the illegal puppy trade on your classified ad sites?

Here are 10 measures you can take to make your site safer for both pets and prospective buyers:

1) Require seller and dog identification details and implement verification systems



traceability and accountability if things go wrong. Veripet is a verification system that has been developed to combat the illegal puppy trade on classified ad sites by

enabling automated identification verification. See our FOUR PAWS Veripet leaflet.

2) Set site rules and provide this information to all sellers before they place an ad.

The rules should include that only ads for dogs that are vaccinated, microchipped and registered, can be placed online. Photos of the puppy together with the mother need to be included in the ad. Puppies should not be separated from their mothers before the age of 8 weeks.

3) Introduce mandatory fields so important information is not bypassed such as vaccination information, health status, age, country of origin and microchip number of the puppy, as well as number of the dog breeding establishment in case the puppy is advertised by a commercial breeder. Ads that are approved for publishing should comply with these requirements.

4) Identify commercial and non-commercial sellers: visually distinguish between commercial and non-commercial sellers in the ads and limit the number of ads per seller according to their status.

5) Ensure that ads are posted for a limited time period to avoid seller misuse (i.e. using the same ad for a prolonged period of time to advertise different litters).



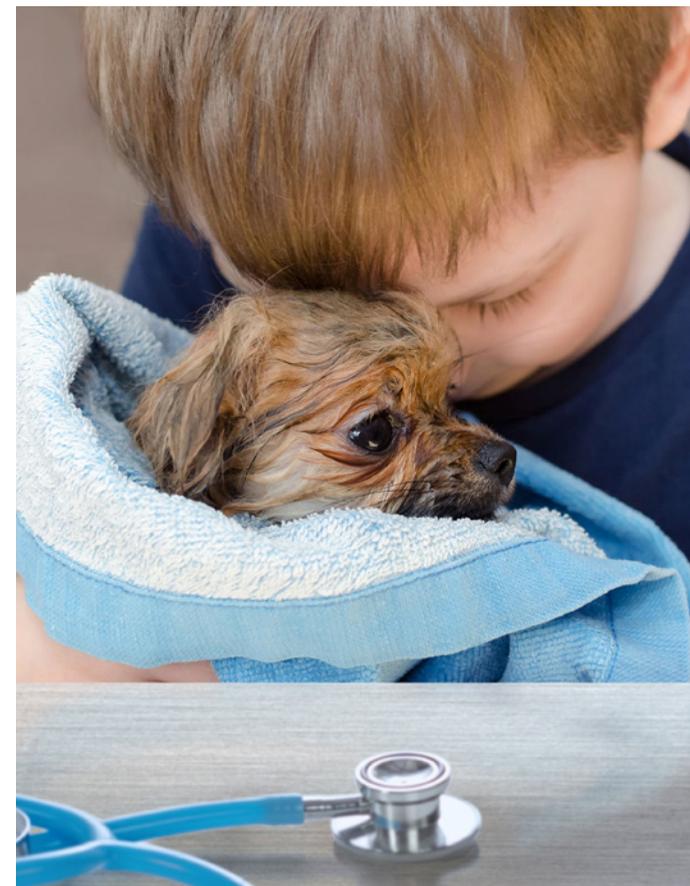
6) Save the history of ads for at least a year after the ad has expired (in line with GDPR requirements) to enable correct and proper identification of the seller in the event that complaints arise but also to identify how many litters the seller is selling per year to see if private sellers are actually commercial sellers and need to be reported.

7) Advise prospective puppy buyers to sign a purchase contract when buying a puppy (or generate a contract for them automatically



to sign with the seller) including the microchip number and other relevant information. Examples of a purchase contract can be found on the FOUR PAWS website.

8) Create user-friendly ways for users to double-check the information provided in the ad themselves (e.g. by linking to websites offering checks of business or microchip number, authority registries and other open databases).



9) Regularly spot check ads to ensure rules are being followed and allow users to report sellers if they are suspicious or if the posting rules are not being followed. The posting rules for the pet section should be easily accessible to all users not just sellers.

10) Increase visibility for sellers who have been verified and/or who have voluntarily provided further details increasing the safety of the ad.

