

Selling Pets Online: Best Friends Animal Society's position

Best Friends Animal Society is opposed to the sale of pets on the Internet. The Web is fast becoming one of the most dangerous enablers for pet abuse and exploitation; thousands of websites, with millions of entries of animals for sale are cropping up at an alarming rate. Meanwhile, millions of animals flood into the country's shelters every year; of these, 4-5 million are euthanized. At least 25% of the dogs in shelters are from a breeder or a breeding operation. Encouraging people to breed more animals by giving them a cheap and easy way to sell them contributes to this problem.

Websites that allow pet "for sale" ads provide an inexpensive and unmonitored vessel for the sale of live animals. Pets sold through Internet ads are often shipped to customers, sight unseen. Despite claims of being a "small kennel," with "home-raised" puppies, countless puppy mills are now using the Internet to sell their puppies direct to the public, skipping the pet store middle man.

While we do not recommend buying puppies in pet stores, Internet sales are even riskier, for both the customers and the animals. The reason is, puppy mills and all breeders who sell pets online operate with no oversight from the USDA and often without state or local oversight to ensure pets are raised humanely, and are healthy. Puppy mill breeders are increasingly shifting to Internet sales because they can legally drop their USDA license and continue to sell puppies. Websites that allow pets to be sold are what makes this possible.

Since online buyers are not privy to the living conditions of the animals, they acquire what they think is a cute, healthy animal. However, when puppies get sick, or are found to have genetic defects—common situations with commercially-bred, puppy mill dogs, there is little or no recourse for the customer who purchased the pet online. Pet "lemon laws," enacted in many states, are difficult to enforce when animals are shipped out of state. Sellers also often tout a puppy's registration papers or pedigree, which is an implied statement of health or quality to the customer, but is no actual guarantee or indication of a puppy's health, quality, or that it was raised in a humane way.

The online sale of animals perpetuates suffering and adds to the pet-overpopulation problem.