



State Police warn of puppy scam

ALBANY—New York State Police have received multiple calls from people scammed out of hundreds of dollars after answering classified ads for purebred puppies for sale.

Victims report after answering the ad, the suspects provide a photo of the breed they are looking for and arrange a deposit to be paid. Once the deposit is cleared, the victim is provided an address, which does not exist, to pick up their puppy. Recently, these fake addresses have been in the St. Lawrence County area.

State Police warn the public of some common themes in this scam:

- The deposit is requested to be made via payment apps, such as Zelle or CashApp.
- All communication with the “breeder” takes place via text.
- An address for the puppies is not provided until after the deposit is made.
- The “breeder” sends the victim stock photos of whatever breed they are looking for, such as Labrador Retriever, Boston Terrier, French Bulldog.

The American Kennel Club offers the following tips on what to avoid when looking for a reputable breeder:

- No phone calls. The seller prefers to handle communication by email and not the phone. A reputable breeder will always communicate with you via phone or video chat (if not in person) before selling you a puppy. Fraudulent sellers are oftentimes outside of the U.S. and may be hiding their phone number by only communicating by email or text message.
- Copycat or stock photos. Photos of the dog or ad text can be found on multiple websites. Search for the text in the listing to see if the seller copied and pasted it from another site.
- Sketchy payment. The seller asks for wiring of money or payment by gift cards. Be aware that if you choose a non-secure method of payment, it is highly unlikely that you will get your money back. Avoid paying a stranger using apps such as Venmo, as it is harder to get your money back if you don't get what you paid for. Paying by credit card or PayPal are typically the safest options.

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- Price is too good to be true. Research the prices for the breed you are considering ahead of time. Purebred dogs sold at deeply discounted prices are typically frauds. If the seller says they register their dogs with a specific organization, you can call the organization to confirm.

The Better Business Bureau also recommends these tips when looking for a reputable breeder:

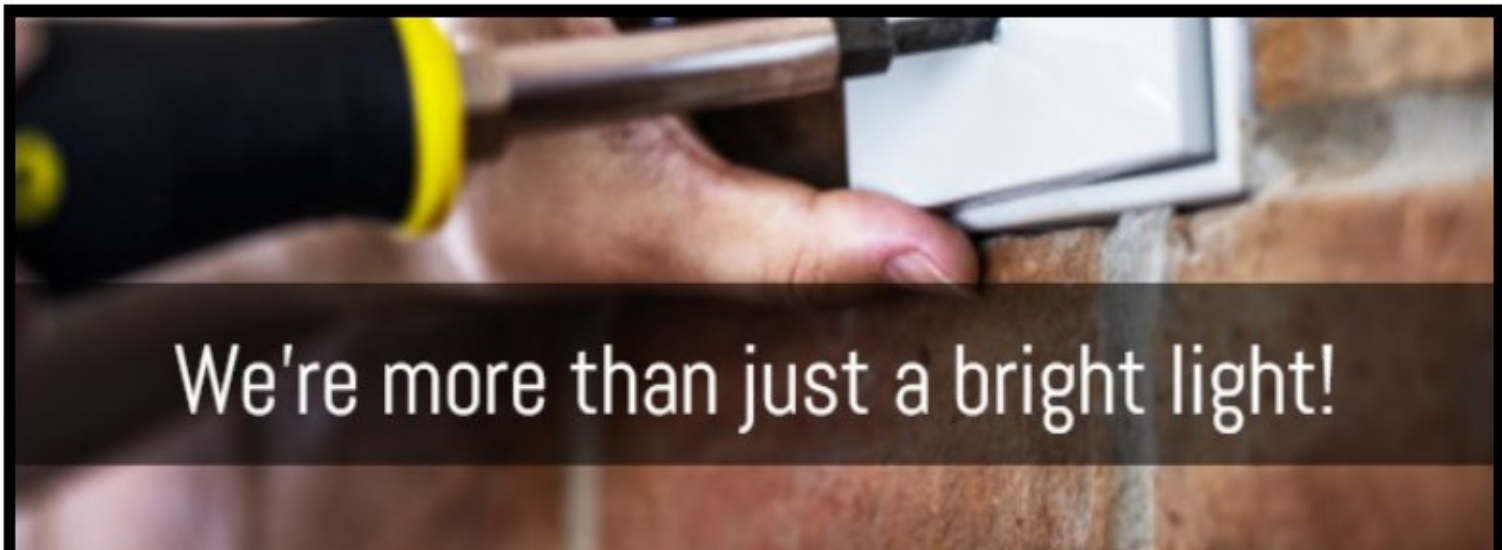
- Use Google's image search function to see if a puppy appears on several websites.

- Request references and speak to other people who have purchased dogs from this

breeder especially if the breeder does not live near you.

- See the pet in person before paying any money. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, consider a video call with the seller so you can see the seller and the actual pet for sale. Since scammers are not likely to comply with the request, this may help avoid a scam.

- Do research to get a sense of a fair price for the breed you are considering. Think twice if someone advertises a purebred dog for free or at a deeply discounted price... it could be a fraudulent offer.



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