

You want to get a puppy, you've decided on the breed and now you start the search for your perfect pet. Where do you begin? Sadly, not all puppy breeders and sellers are reputable.

THERE IS A DARK SIDE TO THIS TRADE – THE PUPPY TRAFFICKERS.

Puppy trafficking is a lucrative business. Tiny puppies are bred in large numbers often outside the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). The puppies are taken from their mothers and may be transported long distances to be sold by some pet shops, via the internet and through local newspaper adverts.

Many puppies fall sick and sadly some die, very often once you've paid out hundreds, or even thousands of pounds in vet bills. And that's on top of what you paid for the puppy in the first place.



RSPCA PHOTO LIBRARY

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JUPITER IMAGES

IF ANYTHING SEEMS SUSPICIOUS, WALK AWAY.

AVOIDING THE TRAP

If you want to buy a puppy, proceed with caution – it's very easy to get caught out and end up buying from a disreputable source.

Make sure you do some research before buying a puppy.

- You should always see a puppy with its mother in the place where it was bred. Ideally you should see the father too, or at least a photo of him. If the breeder can't show you the mother or father you should be suspicious. Get as much information as possible about where the puppy has come from and beware if the breeder is from outside the UK.
- If you are told the puppy has been vaccinated, ask to see the vaccination card. Beware that vaccination cards are easy to fake – if the vet's contact details are not visible or have an address from outside the UK, the card may be fake.
- Bear in mind that pedigree certificates are never a guarantee for the condition of your puppy and may not even mean you are being sold a pure-bred dog.
- Never buy from someone who offers to deliver your puppy or arranges to meet you somewhere.
- Never buy a puppy just because you feel sorry for it. If you are concerned about the health or welfare of a puppy, please contact the RSPCA on: **0300 1234 999**.
- If you are concerned about how you were sold the puppy, please contact Consumer Direct: 08454 04 05 06 or the local authority responsible for the area you bought it from (details can be found in the phone book or on the internet).
- If you suspect the puppy may have come from abroad and does not have a Pet Passport it may be in contravention of UK anti-rabies legislation. Please contact either the Trading Standards Service: www.tradingstandards.gov.uk or Environmental Health Service at your local authority (depending on where you live). Alternatively you can report the matter to your nearest Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Animal Health Office, visit: www.defra.gov.uk

JUPITER, DAMION DIPLOCK/RSPCA PHOTOLIBRARY



BUYER BEWARE

If you buy a faulty fridge or TV you may want to return it, but you're unlikely to want to return your 'faulty' puppy. The puppy traffickers know this and they'll use this knowledge to play on your emotions. And if the worst happens and your puppy dies you may struggle to get a refund.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE THE PUPPY TRAFFICKERS' NEXT VICTIM, DON'T BUY THEIR PUPPIES.

A FAMILY FRIEND OR FUTURE PROBLEM?

A tiny puppy may look cute and cuddly, but if it has not been exposed to a life outside of a breeding barn during its early weeks, it will not have been properly socialised for life in a family home. Such puppies can develop behavioural problems. A good breeder will make sure their puppies have been well socialised to prepare them for life in a new home.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Many puppy traders will ask you to sign a disclaimer to relinquish their responsibility for the future health of your puppy. Please note that this does not affect your statutory rights. If you have concerns about the way your puppy has been sold you should contact **Consumer Direct: 08454 04 05 06** (www.consumerdirect.gov.uk) who will be able to give you advice and, where appropriate, pass details on to your local Trading Standards Service for investigation.



JUPITER IMAGES

COVER PHOTO: JUPITER IMAGES

CUTE ISN'T HE? BUT AT WHAT PRICE?

THE TRUTH ABOUT BUYING A PUPPY



www.rspca.org.uk



RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS
Tel: 0300 1234 555
A charity registered in England and Wales. Charity no. 219099

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