



Pet Shipping and Adoption Scam

There are two variants of the pet shipping and adoption scam. The first is an old scam with a persistent presence on the internet – the fake or counterfeit check scam. FREE ad sites are again at the heart of this fraud. This scam involves the scammer sending you a check for more than the asking price, sometimes telling you it was an error or sometimes telling you to keep more for yourself than the asking price, and asking you to wire them the difference. It works like this - you place an ad for a pet or pets you are selling. The scammer contacts you and says that they are going to send you a check for much more than the asking price and they will allow you to keep more money than the asking price. You receive the check and deposit it into your account, sending (wiring) them back the difference. The problem is the check is later discovered by the bank to be a fake, but it's too late for you. Now you have lost your money and there may be little or no recourse.

There are a couple of dead giveaways with this scam. One is when the buyer claims to be hearing impaired and contacts you through a service that translates the conversation for you. Another, of course, is that they are actually offering you more than the asking price of the pet you are selling. This should be a brilliant bright red flag to you.

The other variation of the pet shipping and adoption scam recently occurred here in St. Paul. It starts with you answering a free ad for a puppy. The scammer tells you they are moving to a new apartment that doesn't allow pets, and how happy they are to find their pet a good home. They may claim to be "God-fearing Christian". They get you to tell them your information. They then divulge that they are actually located in Cameroon, or some other country, and will have to ship the pet to you. They ask you to wire the money for the purchase of the pet. If you do, the next you will hear from them is that they are at the airport ready to ship the pet, but they need you to wire them money to cover the cargo shipping insurance or some other such fee. If you object to the cost, they will negotiate with you, but in the end you have to wire some money to them. They will provide you an e-mail address for the cargo shipper (fake). You will then receive an email that the pet has been shipped. If you are still in it this far, the next you will hear will be that the pet is at another airport, but you will need to pay for a ventilated crate and vaccinations before the pet will be allowed in the U.S. Of course, they provide information where you can wire the money. If you object, you will be vilified by the scammer and threatened with animal abuse and abandonment charges. In the end, you will be out the money and have no pet.

Either way it is a scam to avoid. Whenever there is uncertainty in a situation, it is always best to contact a professional, whether it is a verifiable pet transport company or the administration of the site you have advertised on. It also helps to do some web research. These types of scams are reported broadly on the web - Google them. It is always best to ask questions before rather than waiting until it is too late.