

Media Release

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How healthy is that puppy on the website?

Many people looking for a new puppy for the family are buying them online – with significant potential risk of future health and behavioural problems with their dogs, according to University of Adelaide research.

Supported by the Dog and Cat Management Board, the research has found that puppies less than one year old are commonly sold online for as much as \$3600 but the advertisements often gave no information about vaccination, health and microchip status.

“In the last five years there has been a rapid increase in online sales of puppies in Australia,” says Dr Susan Hazel, Senior Lecturer at the University’s School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences. “Although there are many reputable dog breeders advertising online, there are risks to online sales of puppies and the public needs to be aware.

“Poor breeding lines or an inappropriate early environment can lead to ongoing health and behavioural problems in adult dogs. At best these can reduce quality of life for the dogs and their owners, at worst the dogs may be sent to a shelter where they may be euthanased,” says Dr Hazel who is presenting the research at next week’s Australian Veterinary Association Annual Conference at the Perth Convention Centre.

The study included surveys of puppy owners attending puppy or obedience classes about the source of their puppies. Advertisements on two of the most popular online websites for sales, Gumtree and Trading Post, were then analysed from December 2013 to February 2014.

Of those surveyed, 29% sourced their puppies online, 44% of people found their puppy directly through a breeder, 8% found their puppy through a friend or family and 5% from a pet shop. “It’s possible that in the overall community online purchase of puppies will be even higher but that research still needs to be done,” says Dr Hazel.

On Gumtree (gumtree.com.au) there is a policy that all pups for sale should be vaccinated, vet checked and microchipped, but the majority of ads did not contain this information. A higher proportion of those on Trading Post (tradingpost.com.au) did contain this information, although many still did not.

Dog and Cat Management Board Chair Jan Connolly says people must do their research before buying a puppy.

“Dogs are a long-term commitment,” Mrs Connolly says. “It’s important that potential dog owners take time to research breeds and choose a pet that fits in with their lifestyle. The Select-a-Pet program, available at dogandcatboard.com, can help with making this choice. Once you have chosen a breed and found a puppy that suits you, go to the breeding facility and make sure that it is clean and well run. You should be able to handle the puppies and see the temperament of the mother.

“Then when you bring the dog home, it is very important to ensure they are trained, socialised and desexed to reduce the risk of attacks in the community.”

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