

**Don't be fooled by appearances!  
Companion Animal Network Australia warns pet lovers to watch out for  
scammers in clever disguise!**

Is this rescue group for real? During **Scams Awareness Week 2023 (27 Nov – 1 Dec)**, leading animal welfare charity Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is warning pet lovers to watch out for scammers in clever disguise.

The theme for this year's Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) campaign is "**Impersonation Scams**," delivered for the first time by the newly established [National Anti-Scam Centre](#), built on the work of [Scamwatch](#) to make Australia a harder target for scammers.

Australia CAN has again partnered with [Puppy Scam Awareness Australia \(PSAA\)](#) to help animal lovers identify imposter rescue organisations and breeders, and to avoid pet scams that continue to cause heartbreak and anger.



*Credit T R Photography*

"Scammers are professional crooks, and it can be difficult to distinguish between what is real or a scam," said Trish Ennis, CEO of Australia CAN.

According to ACCC's [Targeting Scams \(April 2023\)](#) report, anecdotally about 80% of all scams reported to Scamwatch include some form of impersonation of a legitimate entity. Scammers can impersonate any organisation or brand, and impersonation scams can be received through a variety of channels.

In 2022 (1 Jan – 31 Dec), Scamwatch received 1,684 reports of pet scams with losses of \$2.3 million, according to ACCC data.

An ACCC Media spokesperson told Australia CAN, "While most pet scams pertain to puppies, in 2022 we saw an increase in kitten scams. Other pets commonly used by scammers are birds and fish."

With scammers continually developing new ways to fool people, pet lovers need to increase their vigilance in checking for those little clues that can alert us that something is a scam, warned Ms Ennis.

"We encourage pet lovers to learn how to spot a puppy scam and avoid the heartbreak, loss of money and in some cases, potentially having to surrender their pet to the shelter," she said.

**PSAA key support group for victims of pet scams**

Puppy Scam Awareness Australia is a key support group for victims of pet scamming and is dedicated to bringing awareness about the thousands of pet scamming syndicates who prey on pet shoppers, helping puppy shoppers spot a scammer and assisting those that have been scammed.

“We don’t just report scammers, we shut down their online presence immediately, and help victims try and get their money back,” said PSAA’s founder Sandy Trujillo.

Since 2021, PSAA received reports relating to more than 1,500 Australian fraudulent bank accounts, 6,000 websites and over 8,000 social media pages/groups and profiles.

“People are easier to scam when they act on emotion and that’s especially true for pet lovers who want a furry friend,” said Ms Trujillo.

“The more who fall the more scammers can make. They constantly reinvent themselves so unsuspecting customers fall quicker. Pet scams have slowed down since COVID and the financial pressures most people find themselves under these days, but unfortunately, we are still getting reports of victims coming through, roughly three a week. They don't find us until it's too late.”

PSAA has launched a Pet Transport and [Breeders Directory](#) to help validate and help protect businesses from scammers stealing their intellectual property. PSAA also works with breeders whose IDs get stolen to restore their reputation, added Ms Trujillo.

“Most breeders are now dubious of strangers coming over and stealing their pups,” she said. “It’s not always possible to find a breeder in your state, too, so people are choosing to buy interstate. That’s how most get caught in scams.”

### Scam prevention resources

- How to spot a pet scam: <https://australiacan.org.au/pet-projects/puppy-scams/>
- For tips to avoid fake websites and a list of fraudulent websites: [www.puppyscamawarenessaustralia.com.au](http://www.puppyscamawarenessaustralia.com.au)
- For a guaranteed pet to welcome into your family, contact an Australia CAN member in your state: <https://australiacan.org.au/who-we-are/>
- If you think you are scammed, contact your financial institution right away. For more information [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)

Follow CANA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#)  
#ScamAwarenessWeek2023 #ScamWatch #puppyscams #petscams #scams

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### About Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN)

Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is a registered charity representing the companion animal welfare work of our six member agencies across the country, including Animal Welfare League QLD, Animal Welfare League SA, Lort Smith (VIC), Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs’ Homes of Tasmania and Saving Animals From Euthanasia Inc (WA).

Together, our members provide rescue, shelter, re-homing, fostering, health care and enrichment services to more than 50,000 animals every year. Through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, we celebrate the human-animal bond and promote responsible pet ownership.

We use our national voice to campaign for the humane treatment of all companion animals and we rally support for programmes that deliver high welfare standards. Australia CAN celebrates the human-animal bond and promotes responsible pet ownership through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, including the [Rent with Pets](#) and [Pets in Aged Care](#) programs.

To discover more, visit [www.australiacan.org.au](http://www.australiacan.org.au)