

Workshop on the critical factors for the welfare of dogs
and cats involved in commercial practices
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ONLINE TRADE OF CATS AND DOGS

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Facts

The Internet Market is a borderless market difficult to control

- Internet platform is a growing lead for puppy sale
 - Classified ads websites (Ebay...)
 - Facebook groups
 - Even Sharing pictures websites (Instagram)
- Classified ads: Most common way to sell animals on the Internet

There is more than 8 Millions of small ads to sell any kind of animals in Europe from breeders, private persons, animal welfare (rescue) organisations etc.

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Reasons for success

- A FEELING OF SAFETY

People have been taught for years not to buy puppies and kitten in pet shops
Lots of sellers pretend to be private persons selling unwanted litters

- A LARGE CHOICE

In one minutes, people can view multiple advertisements for puppies all at once

- EASY ACCESSIBILITY

Internet is opened 7/7 days 24/24 hours
People can consult new ads from everywhere (phones)

- CHEAP PRICES

Prices of puppies on the internet are usually very low

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Reasons for worrying

- An anonymous market
- An unregulated market

=> A golden door for illegal and unscrupulous traders

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On-line Sale = “On-line Fraud”

- **Fake breeders** who are not registered as breeders
- **Fake private sellers** who make you believe that the puppies are born in their family to give you trust
- **Fake animal welfare rescue organisations** who ask for money to transport a rescue dog to your home
- **Fake free gift of the animals:** money is finally asked under diverse pretexts
- **Fake « I have found your animal »** in case of pet lost

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Negative secondary effects

The Internet Market encourages :

- **development of Puppy Mills** (it's easier to sell the dogs as no evidence is asked)

Consequence: The market is flooded with dogs with uncertain origin

- **private owners to breed** (« easy money »)

Consequence: Intensive Breeding in inappropriate conditions

- **unreasoned purchase/ adoption** of animals

Consequence: Higher risk of abandonment of the animals

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No responsibility

- In general, the website owners (such as Ebay inc.) state they are only **host** of the ads and not author of the content = they avoid responsibility by a declaration in the Term of Use that says **they do not guarantee the « legality, quality or safety » of sellings...**

NO CONTROL OF THE SMALL ADS PUBLISHED

- No registration of the seller
- No evidence asked
- No prior content control
- The « complaint button » is only for attempt to copyrights

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A health issue

Result of a recent survey lead in UK:

- **20%** of puppies bought via social media or the internet **die before six months old**
- **12%** of puppies bought via social media or the internet end up with **serious health problems** that require expensive on-going veterinary treatment from a young age

On the contrary, 94% of puppies bought direct from a breeder were reported as having **good overall health**

Source: Puppy Awareness Campaign from the Kennel Club of UK

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A consumer issue

- **Economical aspect**

Price of the animal + veterinary costs

- **Social dimension**

Companion animals are often considered as part of the family.
His unexpected sudden death is a real family drama

- **Legal aspect**

No efficient legal protection of the victims of illegal dog trade
People are often feeling ashamed to complain in front of a court

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No specific legislation covering directly advertisement of trade on the internet

EU LEGISLATION

- Regulation 998/2003 on non-commercial movement
- Directive 92/65 on trade of live animals

NATIONAL LEGISLATION

(selected examples)

- Legislation on trade between private persons (e.g. France)
- Legislation on petshops (e.g. Austria)
- Legislation on advertisement on dog trade (e.g. Belgium)

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BALANCE OF INTERESTS

RESULT:

On-line trade of animals is leading to serious Animal Welfare, Animal Health, Human Health and Consumers protection concerns

HOWEVER:

- ❖ Internet is a useful tool for lost and found animals
- ❖ Internet can be a benefit for serious Animal Welfare organisations - such as shelters and rescue organisations- and can permit to increase the number of adoptions.
- ❖ Internet does not mean systematically fraud: it is a chance for serious breeders to present himself and his dogs

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« It is not about changing everything overnight.

It is about ensuring that tomorrow, everything will be possible »

Pr. JP Marguenaud

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SOLUTION STRATEGIES

(I)

Long term solution:

- ❖ **Clear ban of on-line trade of animals on the Internet**

Mid-term solution:

- ❖ **EU Wide compatible system of identification and registration of all companion animals**
- ❖ **Ban of trade of animals by private persons not officially registered as breeders**
- ❖ **Strict requirements to sell animals on the Internet to the seller in full responsibility / Harmonisation of rules to offer animals on the Internet .**
- ❖ **Proper and efficient controls of all ads published in the « animal » section**

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SOLUTION STRATEGIES (II)

Short term solution:

- ❖ **Mandatory registration of sellers** on the small ads websites with verified data
- ❖ **Obligation to give evidence** of the seller's identity (NGO, breeder, private person...)
- ❖ **Inform the client** about risks of Internet sale of animals
- ❖ **Inform the buyers** on responsible ownership
- ❖ **Proper enforcement** of legislation

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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME



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