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.
**Reasons for success**

- **A FEELING OF SAFETY**
  People have been taught for years not to buy puppies and kittens in pet shops. Lots of sellers pretend to be private persons selling unwanted litters.

- **A LARGE CHOICE**
  In one minute, 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
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
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

- **unreasonned purchase/ adoption** of animals

  **Consequence**: Higher risk of abandonment of the animals
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
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
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)
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
« It is not about changing everything overnight.

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

Pr. JP Marguenaud
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
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
THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME

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