Pet scam reports to BBB Scam TrackerSM appear to be trending downward in 2022, ever since BBB issued an in-depth study Puppy Scams: How Fake Online Pet Sellers Steal from Unsuspecting Pet Buyers in Sept. 2017. As reports decline, however, average monetary losses are climbing with an average loss of $850 in 2022, up 60% since 2017.

2022 reported losses expected to approach $2 million

How the scam works
You:
• Find the perfect purebred puppy online at a great price.
• Answer lots of questions about yourself before learning the seller isn’t nearby and needs to ship the dog to you.
• Have your credit card payment rejected, according to the breeder, who then offers to take cash-sharing apps like Zelle or Venmo.
• Pay for a puppy that never arrives because it never existed.

Scammers:
• Impersonate breeders or create convincing fake websites, using stolen photos
• Steal your credit card information to use or sell at a later time.
• Drag out delivery, sometimes saying the pet is stuck at the airport.
• Impersonate airlines or shipping companies, provide official-looking documents claiming the dog needs an expensive temperature-controlled crate or special insurance
• Continue to ask for more money until you catch on to the scam.
• Disappear.

How to avoid
• Do a reverse image search the pictures of the animal for sale
• Ask to do a video call with the pet and breeder if you can’t meet them in person
• Don’t believe “too good to be true” prices
• Consider adopting from a local animal shelter or buying from a nearby, reputable breeder
• Research pet sellers and BBB Accredited Businesses at BBB.org

2019-2022 complaints and reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Average Loss</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Losses (Canadian dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>$448,123</td>
<td>$506</td>
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<td>$221,718</td>
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Average Losses Growing

Sources: BBB Scam TrackerSM

Red Flags

- Popular breeds, like French Bulldogs, offered at a steep discount
- Breeder refuses to video call with the animal
- Hidden “shipping” or “insurance” costs
- Reverse image search finds the same photo used on other websites

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