



## FOUR PAWS STANDARDS FOR CLASSIFIED AD SITES

### PET TRADE

FOUR PAWS have developed three standards to help protect pets being sold on classified advertising sites. These standards help to improve traceability, transparency, and accountability of sellers, to help reduce illegal and irresponsible selling of pets on classified sites.

#### The three standards are:

1. Seller Identify Verification
2. Animal Welfare Measures
3. Enforcement of the first two standards

#### Details of the three standards:

##### Seller Identity Verification

The first fundamental standard is the introduction of seller identity verification. Classified advertising sites should require each seller on their site (under the pet section) to submit verifiable proof of his or her identity. This will deter those sellers who are performing illegal activities, such as illegal cross-border selling of puppies, from registering with the site. The introduction of seller identity verification will go a long way towards reducing both illegal and harmful trading, and will demonstrate to customers that both safety and trust is important to the site. In addition the following should also apply:

- **Only one seller account per seller**
- **Clear information on the type of seller**
  - There should be a pre-installed option, where every seller must state whether he or she is **private, commercial or a charity** (shelter, rescue centre, etc.), and definitions of these three categories should be clearly visible for all users. If the seller is a charity, or commercial, then it must provide its charity or business registration number. If the seller is private, then he or she should automatically be limited to a specified number of ads per year (maximum one animal ad of the same species per year, maximum two animal ads per year in total). If he or she intends to sell



more animals, the seller should be obligated: to register as a commercial breeder/seller with the relevant public authorities; to be subject to all requisite checking by veterinary authorities; to pay all appropriate taxation; and to establish a commercial seller's account on your site. Many private sellers are operating commercially, and should, therefore, be regulated as commercial sellers.

### **Animal Welfare Measures**

It is essential that classified advertising sites have measures in place, which protect the animals being sold on the site from poor animal welfare practices.

#### **Requirements**

- **The following animals should be prohibited from being sold on classified ad sites**
  - Puppies and kittens which are younger than 8 weeks of age;
  - Rabbits which are younger than 6 weeks of age;
  - Guinea pigs which are younger than 4 weeks of age;
  - Mice and rats which are younger than 4 weeks of age (n.b.: sale of mice, of any age, as pet food is prohibited);
  - Birds which are not fully feathered and self-sufficient (i.e. independent from being fed by their parents);
  - Ferrets which are younger than 10 weeks of age;
  - Primates and wild-caught animals;
  - Protected and endangered species, the sale of which is forbidden by law;
  - Dangerous animals/breeds, the sale of which is forbidden by law;
  - Animals mutilated by docking, cropping, clipping or otherwise;
  - Animals sent by post/courier;
  - Gestating pets;
  - Animals which are specified as being used for fighting, guarding, sports or hunting;
  - Animals to be used as live food/bait;
  - Animals to be swapped for other animals/items;
  - Pets for loan or rent;
  - Animals specifically being advertised as gifts, e.g. as Christmas or Easter gifts;
  - Animals advertised as must go within a certain period, or as urgent sales;
  - Puppies and kittens which cannot be viewed with their mother;
  - Animals that are imported or exported to be sold;



- Animals advertised as free;
- Animals which are advertised as 'wanted ads';
- Animals advertised for breeding purposes.

### **In addition:**

- Pets should only be advertised by their owner;
- The ad should include the following mandatory information: age of the pet and date from which it can be sold; gender of the pet; breed/species; information about how to take care of the pet, or link to information about how to take care of the pet; medical history i.e. vaccinations; relevant certificates/documents i.e. FCI/Kennel Club/pet passport; whether the seller is private, commercial or a charity;
- Exotics – some sites have chosen to show a list of exotic animals, which cannot be sold, because they are difficult to keep as pets; our preference is for a positive list of animals which can be sold, as this gives clear guidance to buyers and sellers, and will reduce the number of unsuitable animals being sold as pets;
- No animals should be sold to anyone under the age of 18 years;
- A photo of the actual animal must be posted (not merely photos from the internet);
- There should be no photos in the ad which are demeaning to an animal, or which compromise an animal's welfare;
- The rules should be posted in a place which is visible to both the seller and buyer and can be easily accessed;
- A reporting mechanism should be in place for buyers to report anonymously sellers who have broken the rules.

### **Enforcement of the standards**

The third fundamental standard relates to active enforcement of the Seller Identity Verification and the Animal Welfare measures. A proactive approach to ensure that all rules are followed and the relevant authorities contacted when relevant, is key to keeping classified sites safe from illegal activities and unscrupulous dealers. To give full effect to such terms, pre-posting checking will be required. It is not sufficient to rely on an animal welfare friendly community to report ads which breach the rules, the classified site should be responsible for identifying these beaches before the ads are posted. Sellers who are found to be attempting to circumvent such



rules should be denied further use of the site and, where relevant, reported to the appropriate authorities.