



# RSPCA Guidelines for the Online Advertising of Pets

These guidelines have been developed to assist websites who trade pets.

As more Australians turn to the internet to search for their new pet, this has important implications for traceability, accountability and animal welfare.

The community expects platforms enabling the online sale of pets to actively protect the welfare of these animals, and make sure they're not supporting poor animal welfare practices.

Each state and territory has basic legal obligations for the online sale of pets, that retailers must meet – but often, these requirements do not go far enough.

That's why the RSPCA has developed these guidelines; in response to strong interest and demand from the community, and to help online retailers develop good policies that protect animals and improve consumer trust.

Please note, these Guidelines relate to the online advertising of companion animals. RSPCA Australia is opposed to the keeping of wild, native or introduced animals as pets or companions.

# RSPCA Guidelines for the Online Advertising of Pets



## 1. Information provided by sellers

At a minimum, sellers must be required to submit the following information prior to posting an advertisement:

### STATUS OF SELLER:

owner, breeder, shelter  
or rescue group

### TYPE OF ANIMAL:

dog, cat, bird, rabbit, reptile, etc.

### EXPECTED ADULT SIZE:

very small, small, medium,  
large or very large

### AGE

### MICROCHIP NUMBER.

All dogs and cats listed for sale  
must be microchipped.

### VACCINATION STATUS:

vaccinated or unvaccinated

### SEX:

male or female

### DESEXED STATUS:

desexed or entire

### HEALTH STATUS:

has the animal undergone a  
veterinary check in the last  
12 months? (Yes or No)

### CONTACT DETAILS

including:

- phone number
- email address
- region animal is located

### BREEDER REGISTRATION NUMBER:

(or similar identification) in those states where it is  
a legal requirement (i.e. Qld, Vic, SA).

### APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT ANIMAL CARE INFORMATION

to be included in the advertisement  
(this could be through a link to the RSPCA website or other reputable source).

In addition, sellers should be encouraged to provide the following information:

- **A DETAILED DESCRIPTION** of the animal, including their breed, personality and preferences (e.g. enjoys company of other dogs, suitable for living with small children).
- **INFORMATION ON TYPE OF VACCINATION(S)** given and date of vaccination
- **ANY HEALTH ISSUES** and breed-specific health screening tests undertaken
- **ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION** such as evidence of council registration number, vaccination certificates, health testing records, breeder registration number.

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## 2. Information provided to buyers

At a minimum, buyers must be provided with the following information when viewing an advertisement:

- A link to the [RSPCA Smart Puppy and Dog Buyer's Guide](#) or [RSPCA Smart Kitten and Cat Buyer's Guide](#)
- A link to database searching website [petaddress.com.au](http://petaddress.com.au) which covers the five private registries that are searchable. Note this website does not include the SA or NSW state government registries.
- A note stating that the best way to ensure that they are not buying from a puppy or kitten farm is to visit the breeding property, view the animal's parents, and follow the advice in the RSPCA Buyer's Guides.
- A note asking if they have considered adopting an animal from a recognised and reputable animal welfare or rescue organisation.



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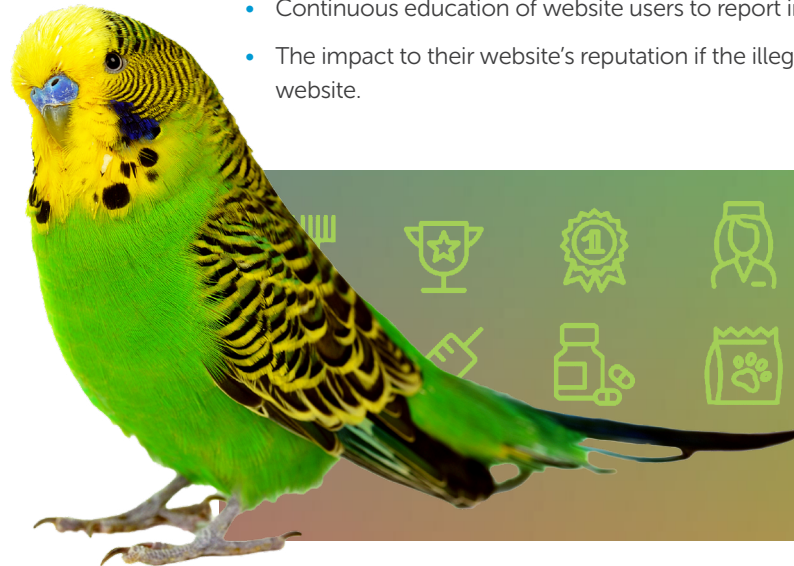
## 3. Website administrator actions

At a minimum, website administrators must complete the following due diligence:

- Provide all sellers with a copy of their applicable policies and/or government codes of practice relating to the listing and sale of animals.
- Provide a disclosure notice notifying all sellers that the website administrator may, at their discretion, provide the seller's contact details and the animal's particulars to the relevant authority for further investigation upon suspicion or reporting of poor welfare practices or conditions.
- Ensure a highly visible 'report animal welfare concern' button is on the same page as the ads to allow users to contact website administrators.
- Actively audit advertisements for 'blacklisted' words (e.g. "dog fighting" "four week old") and remove any misleading or inappropriate ads.
- Review and remove any illegal or inappropriate ads within 12 working hours of notification.
- Cooperate with state and territory governments and welfare organisations to ensure animal adverts comply with relevant legislation

In addition, website administrators should consider:

- Introducing a ranking system where buyers and sellers get ranked by the community, based on prior sales, to help improve transparency and accountability.
- Continuous education of website users to report inadequate care and conditions or suspicious activity.
- The impact to their website's reputation if the illegal and/or unethical sale of animals is found to be occurring on their website.



If you have any questions, or for more information  
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