

Assemblymember Steve Bennett

38th Assembly District



AB 506: Protecting Pets from Predatory Practices

SUMMARY

AB 506 voids contracts between pet brokers and consumers that require a nonrefundable deposit or fail to disclose the original source of dog or cat prior to the deposit being issued. This bill also requires sellers to return money to the buyers within 30 days if the contract is voided.

BACKGROUND

While retail pet stores are unlawful in California, the pet sales industry remains alive and well online. A recent [LA Times article](#) exposed the pipeline between out-of-state breeders and unsuspecting pet buyers—many dogs sold as California-bred actually came from mass breeders in the Midwest.

In today's digital age, many people begin their search for a new pet online; about 36% of dog owners used the internet to find their pets. According to the latest [Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker Risk Report](#), pets were the #1 subject of online purchase scams. Experts believe at least 80% of sponsored advertisements about pets were fake, and reports show that thousands of people across the nation have been scammed by fake pet sellers online. Pet scammers typically create fake websites and use stolen photos from legitimate sites to lure consumers in. Usually the scammers don't own the animals they're selling on these sites. In nearly every fraud case, pet scammers don't allow the buyer to visit the dog or cat in person, but instead require they send money to a supposed third party responsible for transporting the animal.

Pet brokers also operate virtual storefronts selling dogs and cats from out-of-state commercial breeders. These sites offer minimal information on the dogs they are selling, typically limited to the animal's age and breed, but notably exclude the source of the puppy. Before the broker will provide any additional information on a

specific puppy or provide contract terms detailing the responsibility of the seller, potential buyers are either required to pay in full or place a deposit on a puppy to "reserve" it. Deposits vary from site to site, but two of the most popular sites charge nonrefundable deposits of \$599. Consumers who do not complete payment within 72 hours forfeit their "deposit" entirely. The name and access to the commercial breeder is typically restricted until after the sale is complete. Sellers are effectively able to charge consumers hundreds of dollars before giving them an opportunity to ask questions about the puppy they are interested in.

THIS BILL

AB 506 protects consumers from predatory pet sales by voiding contracts between consumers and online dog and cat brokers that fail to disclose the original source of the animal and/or require a nonrefundable deposit. Additionally, this bill ends bait-and-switch scam tactics by requiring sellers to return money to the buyers within 30 days if the contract is voided.

SUPPORT

ASPCA (Co-Sponsor)
San Diego Humane Society (Co-Sponsor)

OPPOSITION

None on file.

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