



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY

Peter C. Harvey, Attorney General

For Immediate Release:
December 17, 2004

For Further Information Contact:
Geneve Morris, Jeff Lamm (973) 504-6327

Know Your Rights Before Buying a Puppy or Kitten

NEWARK — For some, pets make the perfect gift. If you're contemplating purchasing a puppy or kitten as a gift for a loved one this holiday season, there are some things Attorney General Peter C. Harvey wants you to know.

"Purchasing any pet should not be taken lightly. While there's a lot of excitement about owning a new pet, there's also a lot of responsibility that comes with the new addition. Once you've established that the recipient of the new pet will be a diligent and loving owner after the holidays are over, make sure you know your rights under New Jersey law before making that purchase."

Here are tips on what to look for when purchasing a kitten or a puppy:

Know the law. The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs enforces regulations that govern the sale of cats and dogs. These regulations provide consumers recourse if they buy a cat or dog that is unhealthy or deemed unfit for sale after examination by a licensed veterinarian. New Jersey pet dealers must provide consumers with an animal history certificate that includes the animal's birth date, age, sex, breed and color; the date the pet dealer took possession of the animal; the animals' vaccination records; the dates on which the animal was examined by a license veterinarian; and the name and address of the breeder or person from whom the pet dealer purchased the animal.

Check to ensure that the store and the animal cages are clean. Does the puppy or kitten appear friendly and healthy?

Make note of the shots the animal has already been given.

Pet dealers must provide registration papers within 120 days of purchase for an animal represented as a pedigree. Upon taking possession of the animal, take it to a licensed veterinarian for an immediate examination. If the animal is declared unfit for purchase or dies within 14 days following receipt or within 6 months in the case of a congenital or hereditary cause or condition, the consumer is entitled to either obtain a full refund, plus reimbursement of veterinary fees; to keep the animal, attempt to cure it and receive reimbursement for veterinary fees; or to exchange the animal and receive reimbursement for veterinary fees. In cases where the consumer receives reimbursement of veterinary fees, the refund may not exceed twice the purchase price of the animal.

If the animal is sick, it is important to obtain from the veterinarian who treated the animal an "Unfit for Purchase Certificate" within the 14-day period. The certificate must be given to the pet dealer within five days of the animal being declared by the veterinarian unfit for purchase.

Look for a notice informing you of your rights when purchasing an animal. Pet dealers are required by law to provide you with a copy of the notice.

Consumers who have a complaint may contact Consumer Affairs' Consumer Service Center at 800-242-5846 (if calling from within the State of New Jersey) or 973-504-6200. Consumers may also e-mail Consumer Affairs at: askconsumeraffairs@lps.state.nj.us or visit its Web site at: www.njconsumeraffairs.gov.

###

