

## The Nigerian/Cameroon Internet Pet Scam

This is the most common pet scam worldwide, and is one well worth avoiding. Most cases aren't reported because the people who are scammed simply feel too stupid that they have been caught out. It goes like this..

### 1. You get an email (unsolicited).

It might be from an "Australian missionary" who says they know a friend of yours and they are being shipped to another country where the pet can't go. It might be from a stranger that says he has picked your name off a website and tells you that a group of pets has been rescued from abuse and there are too many to resettle.

It says that there is a pet that needs to be rescued. A sweet, lovable pet that will die within just days unless you rescue it. There may be a photo – a really beautiful photo that melts your heart.



### 2. The email almost always offers the pet at lower than the price you would expect to pay and usually offers "transportation" as well.

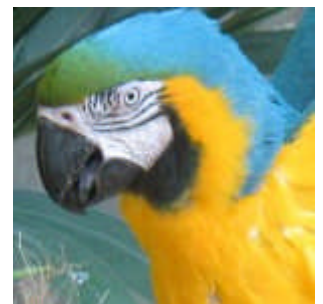
That's the hook that gets you in, if the "heart tug" technique above hasn't already. Getting something for "less than retail" is attractive for many people and offsets transport costs. The offer of transportation sounds good because you won't have to worry about all the details.

### 3. The email invites you to call the "owner" to inquire and may offer a website to check "legitimacy".

So you call the owner and they seem legitimate, but it's usually a mobile phone – it could be anyone, anywhere.

So you check the website and it looks legitimate, and may even look like it's a local business that you can check in the Yellow Pages, BUT if you look carefully these websites:

- ✚ Have no physical address listed;
- ✚ Often have no local Australia PO Box address;
- ✚ May have ".com.ni" or "com.cm" endings on the internet addresses – a sure sign they are from Nigeria or Cameroon, but they may not have either. BE CAREFUL! ".cm" (Cameroon) looks just like "com" if you are reading quickly.
- ✚ Often use the logos or photos of other businesses on the websites to make themselves look "official" (one recent case even used the WA Government logo!)
- ✚ May have odd grammar or spellings in the site
- ✚ Email addresses may not match the website address and may have different endings on the email address like the ones above.



### 4. The email invites you send money in advance, usually through Western Union or some other form of foreign transfer.

They don't accept cheques, they don't accept credit cards and they don't allow direct debit.

*This advice is of a general nature and is not a substitute for professional assistance.*

© Pets Australia 2011 Become a member of Pets Australia today!

Produced by Pets Australia Pty Limited ABN 79 141 473 958 PO Box 176 Pymble NSW 2073

Email [petsaustralia@petsaustralia.org](mailto:petsaustralia@petsaustralia.org) [www.petsaustralia.org](http://www.petsaustralia.org) Ph 02 8214 8653

5. You then receive “paperwork” for your pet, including third-party shipping company, time of arrival and even Flight number.

### **SO HOW DO YOU GET SCAMMED?**

You see a pet you like; perhaps you even see the photo;

You “check” by phoning or emailing that the pet is available. You might even talk to the people;

You wire the money; You receive the paperwork; You turn up to collect your pet  
AND....



**There is no pet and never was.**

The airline knows nothing.

You phone the pet transport company on the paperwork, who knows nothing about the shipment because there never was any pet.

All the paperwork, the documents you have are fraudulent, as was the website and email addresses.

The bad guys have your money, and you have a broken heart.

### **SO HOW DO YOU AVOID THE SCAM?**

**Rule 1: Pets are not an impulse buy.** If you are buying a pet “because it might be destroyed” you need to reconsider buying the pet at all. These emotional games can mean you end up with a disaster!

**Rule 2. Get your pets locally when possible.** There are thousands of wonderful pets within 1000km of where you live, why import one from Africa? Worse still, Australia has really strict quarantine laws, and most people trying to bring pets into Australia “from overseas” spend months getting the pet through quarantine.

**Rule 3: A deal that looks too good to be true usually is.** If the pet looks too cheap, there might not be a pet.

**Rule 4: Check that there is a real pet.** DO NOT ask for photos as these may be frauds. Physically go and check, or get a friend to check, or ask for the location and pay the local veterinarian to go and check.

**Rule 5: If you are buying over the web, always pay in a way that can be traced.** Use a credit card (which can be reversed, but DO NOT give the number to someone to process), OR a cheque (but NEVER a bank cheque or cash cheque), OR demand an account number for direct debit (and then check the location of the account!).

**Rule 6: Don't trust the paperwork.** Demand copies of paperwork prior to purchase, and phone the shipping company in advance.

**Rule 7. If you do get caught, report it!** Departments of Fair Trading collect important statistics on these scams, so report your story to them - or to us on [petsaustralia@petsaustralia.org](mailto:petsaustralia@petsaustralia.org).

*This advice is of a general nature and is not a substitute for professional assistance.*

© Pets Australia 2011    Become a member of Pets Australia today!

Produced by Pets Australia Pty Limited ABN 79 141 473 958 PO Box 176 Pymble NSW 2073

Email [petsaustralia@petsaustralia.org](mailto:petsaustralia@petsaustralia.org)    [www.petsaustralia.org](http://www.petsaustralia.org)    Ph 02 8214 8653