

The Pet Business Advertising Scam

This is a relatively new scam and can damage your business. Most cases aren't reported because the people who are scammed simply don't know how to deal with it.

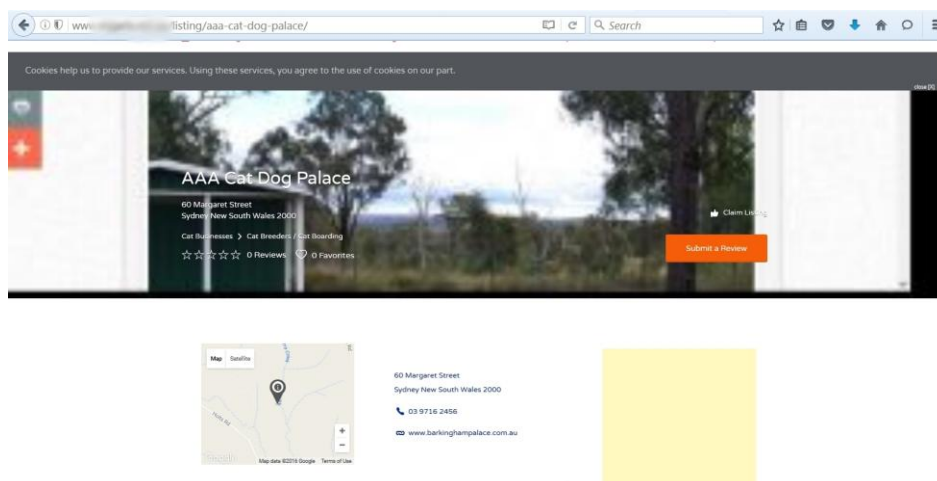
It goes like this..

- 1. You get an email or a Facebook message (unsolicited) about a new pet business advertising site link, OR someone tells you your business is listed on an advertising site.**

When you look at the site, you discover that your business has been listed on the advertising site without your knowledge or consent. In one case your website banner is pictured so it looks like you have put the advertisement there legitimately, and if you click on the link it does go to your actual website. BUT either the street address is wrong, or the phone number is wrong – REALLY wrong – usually a different state or totally wrong phone number.

The fake website uses the names and search words for legitimate pet businesses to help advertise their scam site – including industry representative bodies – to help increase their searchability.

The only form of contact with the perpetrators is through an internet form.



- 2. So you use the internet form to let them know that your listing is incorrect.....**

That's the hook that gets you in. You don't want people listing your business on their advertising classifieds without your permission, and you don't want potential clients using the wrong numbers and getting scammed (see XXXXXX below)

Then they say to you that their site has "excellent searchability" and you should just convert your ad to the correct details which you can have for \$\$\$ and just provide your credit card details.....

SNAP – THEY HAVE YOUR BUSINESS CREDIT CARD DETAILS!

- 3. In some cases, the client phones the wrong number as listed on the fake advertising site, and reaches a person who says he/she is from your company. They then "book them for grooming" or "book them for boarding" and SNAP – they have the Client's credit card details. Not only that, but when the client realises their credit card has been frauded, OR when they turn up to your business and there is no booking – WHO gets the blame? YOU! Your business has been caught up in an international business identify fraud ring, and is suffering as a result.**

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

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To make matters worse, the client may report you to the ACCC for failing to provide contracted services, or to the credit reference agency – all designed to cause you business pain.

SO HOW DO YOU AVOID THE SCAM?

This is a classic business identity fraud scam – one that can cause your business really significant harm.

Rule 1: DO NOT “give in” to sites that list your business without your permission. ASK them to remove the listing in writing immediately and DO NOT provide your credit card details! Some will also seek personal information so they can identity fraud your business better – DO NOT provide any information.

Rule 2. Check the owners of the website! Most of the current sites originate out of Europe, Germany, Eastern Europe, Bulgaria, Albania – but you will have to look up the domain name owners to see this. The problem with this is that it’s virtually impossible to commence legal action outside Australia – and they know it. REMEMBER that sites can have a “.com.au” name and still be located overseas.

Go to <http://whois.ausregistry.com.au/> which should also give you the email addresses of the persons who are managing the site. Contact that person direct and ask for you listing to be removed from the site. It can unsettle these people to find out that you know their email addresses, and some will comply at that point.

It’s also worth looking the owners up across the net – on LinkedIn, Facebook etc. In one case we have discovered EIGHT scam sites all registered to the same person!

IF IN DOUBT, PHONE THE BUSINESS that supposedly owns classifieds website – it should be an Australian number, and the person on the end of the phone should provide you with enough information for you to tell if it’s a scam or not.

Rule 3. Report the scam! ACCC Scamwatch is a good place to record the scam. Also report the scam to Google and (but don’t hold out any hope that Google will do anything) and Facebook if it’s a FB page (and they are VERY good at removing scam spages). You can also report it to the Fraud squad at your local police station.

DO NOT make any comment on their facebook pages, or their website about the owners of the business. They can have you for defamation even if everything you say about them is factual.

Rule 4: Warn your clients. Pop a note on your counter, or email your clients asking them ONLY to use your website as your business is being frauded. Make sure your website has an email address, NOT an internet form, so clients can contact you directly. Give your clients your current phone numbers. Ask them to report any scamming.

At the end of the day, business identity fraud can be incredibly difficult to stop – because of the overseas issue, and because there are few laws stopping it. BUT your business can be really badly hurt.

Rule 5: Educate your clients! Tell your clients that even if they find your business on classifieds, they should NOT use the details on the advertising site, but go to your website and contact you directly.

Unfortunately there are still many business identity fraudsters out there – and we ought to know, because we deal with fraud on YOUR industry group at least once per month!

Rule 6: DO NOT “do nothing”! This will only embolden more sites to copy those databases, and before you know it....

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