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Pet buyers beware: know your sellers; Dogs bought in recent weeks sick, flea-ridden, women say

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Valley Bureau

Steam Mill Village - Elizabeth Eye had wanted to buy a puppy for her daughter for a long time.

She finally broke down two weeks ago and bought a cocker spaniel puppy.

But the pup has had major problems.

It came from a Digby County seller who has been the source of many complaints and a pending court case involving cruelty to animals.

"I got taken big-time," Ms. Eye said Monday at her home in Steam Mill Village, Kings County. "I wanted for years to get a dog, and now I have all these problems."

It all started when she saw an ad for cocker spaniel pups posted on a bulletin board in Coldbrook.

Ms. Eye called the number and offered to visit the breeder at her home to see the pups.

But the seller refused, offering to bring the animals to her. They met in a parking lot in Berwick.

The woman had three pups she said were purebreds, and Ms. Eye bought one for \$500. She received no registration papers, health guarantee, record of vaccinations or even confirmation of a visit to a veterinarian.

"I thought it was strange," Ms. Eye said. "It didn't seem the kind of thing a reputable breeder would do."

Within hours, she realized she had made a big mistake. "I learned a valuable lesson," she said.

The pup was loaded with fleas, undernourished, hadn't been weaned properly and didn't know how to eat solid food.

"He came with the worst smell, and I don't mean just a dog smell or a dirty smell. It was unreal."

The dog had diarrhea and its feces were filled with worms. Ms. Eye took the pup to a vet, who treated him for worms.

She phoned the dog seller, who hung up on her.

Ms. Eye is now spending lots of money on vet bills. She doesn't know if the dog is a purebred. She doesn't even know its age.

"I have no idea what I'm in for in the future," she said.

Michelle Robichaud of Lower Sackville bought a cocker spaniel puppy from the same seller two weeks ago.

She regrets not going to a reputable breeder, who would have given her registration papers, a health guarantee and a record of vaccination and deworming.

"I kick myself, because I really screwed up," she said Monday. She had just returned from the vet, who told her the pup was severely malnourished. She's not sure if it will survive.

Joan Tracey, president of the Kings County SPCA, warned would-be buyers to stay away from puppy mills and backyard breeders who are in it only for profit.

"As long as people buy from them, they're going to continue to be there," she said, adding that the person who sold the pups to Ms. Eye and Ms. Robichaud is well-known to the SPCA.

Ms. Tracey said anyone who pays \$500 for a puppy should get registration papers and record of a vet's visit. They should also be able to see the premises where the pups were bred and the parent animals.

"Reputable breeders stand behind their puppies," she said.

Crown prosecutor Lloyd Lombard is appealing last month's dismissal of animal cruelty charges against Gail Benoit, 33, and Dana Bailey, 39, of Marshalltown, Digby County.

They were charged in November 2000 after three dogs were seized from their property by the SPCA. The couple was originally convicted and fined.

They appealed, and a new trial was ordered. Last month, Judge John Nichols dismissed the case, saying their rights had been violated.

Figure:

Gordon Delaney/Valley Bureau
Elizabeth Eye of Steam Mill Village, Kings County, holds the cocker spaniel puppy she bought for her nine-year-old daughter.

Gordon Delaney/Valley Bureau
Elizabeth Eye of Steam Mill Village, Kings County, holds the cocker spaniel pup she bought for her daughter.

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