



**Letitia James**

New York State Attorney General

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Attorney General James Files Lawsuit Against Pet Store That Unlawfully and Deceptively Sold Sick Puppies To Consumers

# Attorney General James Files Lawsuit Against Pet Store That Unlawfully and Deceptively Sold Sick Puppies to Consumers

**December 16, 2021**

*Investigation Finds Shake A Paw Locations on Long Island Violated State Laws by Fabricating Health Certificates and Lying to Consumers About Health, Breed, and Origin of Puppies*

*On Multiple Occasions, Shake A Paw Sold Consumers Critically Sick Puppies That Died Within Days or Weeks of Purchase*

*AG James Obtains Testimony From Vet Who Formerly Worked for Shake A Paw, Details Unethical Behavior and Inhumane Conditions of Doags*

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Hicksville and in Lynbrook, which serve the broader tri-state area — falsely advertised sick pets as healthy, fabricated health certificates, failed to disclose the animals' legitimate medical conditions, misrepresented puppies' breeds, and refused to reimburse consumers for veterinarian bills when they lodged complaints with Shake A Paw. Attorney General James also [filed a motion for a temporary restraining order against Shake A Paw](#) in an effort to protect the puppies in danger at the two Long Island locations, as well as to freeze funds that are in bank accounts managed by Shake A Paw for restitution.

“Shake A Paw’s actions of deceiving consumers into purchasing sick or injured dogs is unconscionable and illegal,” said **Attorney General James**. “My office’s thorough investigation uncovered a series of violations by Shake A Paw that defrauded consumers and found sick puppies that came from dangerous puppy mills. When New Yorkers purchased puppies from Shake A Paw, they did not expect to bring home dogs in such heartbreaking and horrifying conditions. Today, we are holding Shake A Paw accountable for their unlawful and inhumane actions by filing a lawsuit to permanently ban the company from selling puppies any longer, as well as to recoup what consumers paid. Animal mistreatment is despicable and will not be tolerated.”

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*Picture provided by affected consumer Danielle Fasano.*

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*Puppy from known puppy mill breeder that supplied Shake A Paw.*

*Picture taken by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Inspectors.*

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*Picture provided by affected consumer Meaghan Huber.*

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*Puppy from known puppy mill breeder that supplied Shake A Paw.*

*Picture taken by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Inspectors.*

After receiving numerous consumer complaints, the OAG opened an investigation into both Shake A Paw locations on Long Island. Shake A Paw advertises their puppies as healthy and of the highest quality. After reviewing hundreds of veterinary records and consumer complaints, the OAG’s investigation found that Shake A Paw sold puppies with serious illnesses – with some puppies passing away within days or weeks of purchase. Several puppies were suffering from serious illness and congenital defects, displaying visible signs of illness at the time of sale, despite receiving health certifications signed off by Shake A Paw’s contracted veterinarians, oftentimes mere days before sale.

The OAG analyzed 408 veterinary records of puppies sold at the Shake A Paw locations, out of which:

- 52 percent of the puppies presented coughing, sneezing, an upper respiratory infection, and/or breathing problems;
- Roughly 54 percent were infected with parasites; and
- Almost 10 percent were diagnosed with pneumonia.

In addition, the OAG received 113 Shake A Paw records, out of which 67 – or almost 60 percent of the health certificates – were issued between zero and 19 days prior to sale.

The illnesses and congenital defects in these animals were found to be consistent with puppies that are purchased from puppy mills. The OAG investigation found thousands of puppies from known puppy mills that were shipped to both Shake A Paw locations on Long Island. Through financial records, the OAG found payments being made to known puppy mills by Shake A Paw. In fact, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) notified the OAG that the U.S. Department of Justice indicted a puppy mill

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After purchasing puppies, many consumers were left with hefty veterinarian bills shortly thereafter. Shake A Paw would often give consumers the run around when they called to ask for reimbursement, were hung up on, and/or told that they were not entitled to their money back. Shake A Paw representatives also directed consumers to the company’s own veterinarians, who often failed to diagnose illnesses; telling consumers that they would not be reimbursed if they visited their own veterinarians — a violation of the Pet Lemon Law. Additionally, Shake A Paw refused to reimburse consumers who purchased sick animals or animals that passed away, another violation of the Pet Lemon Law.

Through her lawsuit — filed in Nassau County State Supreme Court — Attorney General James is seeking restitution for the victims over Shake A Paw’s unfair and deceptive conduct; civil penalties for such conduct; a permanent injunction preventing Shake A Paw from selling, importing, exporting, bartering, exchanging, or gifting any animals in the future; and an end to the company’s further violation of consumer protection laws.

“I’m so grateful that Attorney General James is taking action to hold Shake A Paw accountable for what all of the puppies and families have had to go through,” said **Erin Laxton, who purchased a dog at the Lynbrook Shake A Paw that passed away within weeks of purchase.** “I just hope that in the future other families don’t have to suffer the same grief that we did. I’m proud that I could be involved in this because it feels like I’m getting justice for my dog Merlin.”

“I would like to thank Attorney General James and her team for advocating for these sick dogs and holding Shake A Paw accountable for their negligence,” said **Danielle Fasano, who purchased her dog Shaq from the Hicksville Shake A Paw and immediately had to take the dog to a veterinary hospital to be treated for pneumonia.** “Shake A Paw’s actions are heartless. They put profits over treating puppies humanely. We hope this lawsuit brings an end to Shake A Paw’s terrible treatment of puppies.”

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**Nassau County Executive Laura Curran.** “I commend Attorney General James for taking action against both the alleged inhumane treatment of these animals and the alleged criminal practices that aimed to mislead and harm Nassau residents.”

“Adopting a ‘forever’ friend shouldn’t be a process filled with lies, falsified records, or expensive veterinary bills,” said **State Senator Jim Gaughran.** “Shake A Paw deceived countless families looking to bring home a puppy, prioritizing profits over the puppies’ well-being. I thank Attorney General James for holding Shake A Paw accountable for their egregious behavior.”

“It is reprehensible that Shake A Paw would exploit the trust of consumers to make a profit while risking the health and safety of puppies,” said **State Senator Kevin Thomas.** “Not only were consumers lied to about the origins of their pets, but also the health and wellness of the beloved animals they were bringing into their homes. I thank Attorney General James for taking swift action to hold Shake A Paw accountable and protect New York’s animals from neglect and cruelty.”

“As the proud owner of a rescue dog and an advocate for animal rights in the Legislature, I am appalled by the revelations of Attorney General James’ investigation,” said **State Assemblymember Charles Lavine.** “Such unethical and illegal behavior must be rooted out and those responsible prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

“The pet store industry has continually placed profits over the welfare of animals and the Shake A Paw stores on Long Island are clearly no different. They’ve followed the same playbook that other pet stores across the state use — advertising the animals in their care as healthy and sourced from the most reputable breeders, while behind the scenes engaging in abuse, deceptive practices and supporting the puppy mill industry,” said **State Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal.** “Attorney General James’ thorough investigation reveals that Shake A Paw regularly sold sick animals to unsuspecting customers.”

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Shake A Paw’s victims deserve, it will be far more difficult to alleviate the heartache that families throughout our region have experienced as a result of this pet store’s profoundly inhumane and deceptive conduct. I applaud Attorney General James for taking decisive action to protect consumers and affirm our unwavering support for the welfare of animals.”

“We are thankful to Attorney General James for pursuing those who would sell sick or injured puppies to our Long Island residents,” said **North Hempstead Supervisor Judi Bosworth**. “Adding a new pet to your family should be a fun and exciting time. It should not include a shocking and worrisome trip to the vet.”

“New York has one of the country’s highest number of puppy-selling pet stores, which sell puppies from out-of-state, commercial breeding facilities — known as puppy mills — where puppies are cruelly bred without regard for their health or well-being,” said **Matt Bershader, president and CEO, ASPCA**. “Every year, thousands of these puppies are marketed in New York pet stores as healthy dogs from responsible breeders, which is far from the truth. We are grateful to Attorney General Letitia James for taking decisive and compassionate action to shut down this pipeline to protect both animals and consumers.”

“We’re pleased to have supported Attorney General James and her office in their efforts to stop the importation of sick animals to New York pet stores,” said **Gary Rogers, board president, Nassau County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SCPA)**. “We always advise consumers to do their due diligence about where they are purchasing their pets from and immediately get them checked by a veterinarian upon purchase.”

This case is being handled by Assistant Attorneys General Christina Bedell and Dorothy Nese, both of the Nassau Regional Office, with additional support from Investigators Paul Matthews and Heather Harmer, Consumer Frauds Representative Adam Levin,

Legal Assistant Kristin G. Smith, and Deputy Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs, Thomas J. ...

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