Would you know how to spot the scam? New Report Exposes the Dangerous Rise of “Fake Rescue” Content on social media

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The Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC), a collaborative network of 29 animal protection organisations, has today released a groundbreaking report exposing the growing threat of “fake animal rescue” content on social media platforms. Titled Spot the Scam: Unmasking Fake Animal Rescues, the report calls on social media companies to prioritise animal welfare over financial gain and urges the public to be vigilant in recognising and reporting such content.

Fake rescue content depicts animals in perilous situations—abandoned, trapped, or attacked—only for the so-called rescuer to stage a dramatic intervention for views and donations. Often, these animals are intentionally harmed or placed in dangerous circumstances, making the rescuers complicit in their suffering.

Commenting on the report, International Animal Rescue’s president, Alan Knight, said:

“The setting up of fake rescues is a particularly vile and sickening way to exploit and abuse animals for money - and even more so because it plays on the compassion and kindness of an unwitting audience eager to see suffering animals saved from harm. It’s easy to be misled into thinking a scene of an animal needing help is genuine, and that is why it’s essential that social media platforms do much, much more to identify and remove this type of content.”

International Animal Rescue has developed a four-step guide to help people spot fake animal rescues on social media.

Click here: International Animal Rescue - PDF Four steps to spot fake rescues online

Four steps to spot fake rescues - Video version here

A new report documenting the dangerous phenomenon of

“fake animal rescue” content on social media, launched 1st October calling on social media companies to tackle the content that is putting financial revenue above animal welfare.

The report, **Spot the Scam: Unmasking Fake Animal Rescues,** calls on social media companies to do more to tackle fake rescue content on their platforms. It also aims to raise awareness with the public and animal lovers, to ensure they are not exacerbating the problem, by falling for fake rescue content, generating views in the millions for fake rescue content creators.

Fake rescue content features animals who have been harmed or placed in dangerous situations specifically so that the content creator can appear to rescue the animal from that situation to generate revenue from "likes" and "shares", as well as from direct donations from the viewer.

The Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC), made up of 29 animal protection organizations, conducted research into the online trend of fake rescue content. It found:

- 1022 links showing fake rescue content were collected over six weeks from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter/X.
- The links located by SMACC had been watched 572,013,959 times.
- Almost 52% of links were found on Meta owned platforms, Facebook and Instagram, with YouTube and TikTok each featuring around a quarter of total content.
- 21% of fake rescue creators asked viewers for donations under the guise of helping animals, usually by Paypal links.
- From the 605 links that SMACC gathered, almost 22% of the content was suggested to our researchers by the platform's algorithm.

Fake Rescue content shows animals in situations of immense danger; abandoned on the streets, buried alive or trapped in objects, being attacked by predators, and in need of medical attention. Very little is known about what happens to the animals after these video clips; what conditions they are kept in, how they are treated by the content creator, or if they are kept in suitable environments.

Kittens, puppies and young monkeys are predominantly used, presumably due to the availability of these animals and the ease of handling them. Cats were the most featured animal, in 42% of videos, followed by primates, dogs, snakes and turtle species.

You can view the fill censored report here: Censored report

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IAR Spotting Fake Rescues

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