

Would you know how to spot a fake rescue online?

New Report Exposes the Dangerous Rise of “Fake Rescue” Content on social media as creators put animals at risk

FOUR STEPS TO HELP SPOT FAKE ANIMAL RESCUES ON SOCIAL MEDIA



CHECK THE SOURCE

- No credible animal organization linked to the video.
- Check the background. Does it look staged or set up in the same location repeatedly, like a residential home?
- Verify the organization. Look up the group associated with the video to see if they have a credible online presence.
- Are they asking for funds on a non-traceable platform?



ANALYZE THE SCENE

- Look at how the animals are positioned. Are they posed or placed in unnatural situations, like a cat with a snake?
- Unlikely chance encounters. If the animal appears to be conveniently in trouble at just the right moment, it's likely a setup.
- What animals are they using? 'fake rescue' videos typically feature kittens, puppies, primates, and young monkeys such as macaques.
- Check the background. Are these rescues all happening in the same location, with similar props?



QUESTION THE FILMING

- Rescuer delays helping to get footage. If the person filming waits before intervening, they might be prioritizing content over the animal's safety.
- Obvious video edits. Does the footage seem heavily edited or cut?
- Multiple takes suggest staging. Multiple camera angles. It's unlikely someone would have time to set up different cameras during a real emergency.



TIMING OF RESCUE

- How is the animal reacting? Does the animal appear calm or in a distressed, posed state? Real rescues often show genuine fear or distress in animals.
- Some fake videos show animals struggling for extended periods before any intervention.
- Timing of the rescue. If the rescuer arrives 'just in time' it's often a setup.
- Stay alert, and don't let fake rescues fool you!

These four steps are suggested by the Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC) in their [Spot The Scam](#) report.

[International Animal Rescue](#) are member of SMACC.

For more information on the report please email:

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Uckfield, East Sussex Oct 1, 2024 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - 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, one of the SMACC Network, 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.

[- International Animal Rescue 4 steps PDF](#)

[- International Animal Rescue 4 steps video](#)

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.

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Source : International Animal Rescue

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