



Posts With Videos of Puppies Seemingly for Sale

2025-054-FB-UA, 2025-055-FB-UA

Summary

The Oversight Board has reviewed two Facebook posts with videos of puppies that appeared to be for sale, noting that the company correctly applied policies designed to enable legitimate commerce on the platform while protecting users from fraud. However, the Board finds that Meta should be clearer to users that the policy on restricted goods and services is intended to ban peer-to-peer selling of animals specifically. The Board has overturned Meta’s original decision to remove the content in one case and has upheld Meta’s decision to remove it in the other.

About the Cases

In March 2025, two Facebook users posted videos of puppies. The first post, from Australia, has a video showing two puppies in a pen with a caption stating their breed. The caption is repeated in text overlaying the video, along with an Instagram handle. The page where the videos were posted says the user is a specialist dog breeder and includes a business name and address, and other details.

The second post, from the Philippines, has videos of six puppies, with a caption saying the user is “looking for furparents” and that six pure-breed puppies are “open for reservation,” along with medical information, dates of birth and when they are available. There is an invitation to contact the user for more details.

The first post was online for four days and had fewer than 10 views before Meta’s classifiers removed it for violating Meta’s Restricted Goods and Services Community Standard, which prohibits selling non-endangered animals. The second post was online for six days and had fewer than 5,000 views, when Meta’s classifiers removed it for violating the same policy.

In the first case, the user appealed to Meta and after the company upheld its decision, the user appealed to the Board. When the Board selected the case, Meta reviewed its original decision and restored the post. In the second case, the user also appealed to



Meta. The appeal was closed without being reviewed and the user appealed to the Board.

Key Findings

Meta was right to restore the first post after the Board selected the case because it does not violate the company’s policy on selling non-endangered animals. The post is allowed under an exception that permits sales by established “brick-and-mortar” businesses, while prohibiting peer-to-peer selling, which is a significant source of online fraud.

The second post did violate the policy, however. While there were no signs of attempted fraud, it was an attempt to make peer-to-peer sales and there was nothing to indicate that the user was operating a legitimate business. Meta was justified in removing the post as part of the company’s attempts to protect users from potential scams.

The Board finds that Meta should clarify the way it describes the exception to the policy. “Brick-and-mortar” is an outdated phrase that is not understood everywhere. It would be clearer for users, including the legitimate businesses operating responsibly on Meta’s platforms, if the policy simply stated that peer-to-peer sales are prohibited. Meta should also review the speed at which the relevant classifiers operate to ensure that delays in reviewing content do not undermine the policy’s goals.

The Oversight Board’s Decision

The Board overturns Meta’s original decision to remove the content in the first case and upholds the company’s decision to remove the content in the second case.

The Board also recommends that Meta:

- Should clarify that peer-to-peer trade in non-endangered animals is prohibited and remove references to “brick-and-mortar entities” from this part of the policy. The policy should instead state that Meta applies a multi-factor test to determine what constitutes an established business permitted



to sell non-endangered animals on the platform, and list several of the relevant factors.

*Case summaries provide an overview of cases and do not have precedential value.

Full Case Decision

1. Case Description and Background

In March 2025, two Facebook users posted content with videos of puppies. In the first case, an administrator of a public Facebook page based in Australia posted a short video showing two puppies in a pen with a caption stating the breed of the puppies. The same words are repeated with an Instagram handle in text overlaying the video. The page where the content was shared states that the user is a specialist dog breeder and includes a business address, name, opening hours and other details. The post was online for four days and was viewed fewer than 10 times before it was identified and removed by Meta’s classifiers for violating the prohibition in Meta’s [Restricted Goods and Services Community Standard](#) on selling non-endangered animals. The user appealed to Meta and after the company upheld its decision, the user appealed to the Board. Following the Board’s selection of the case, Meta reviewed its decision and determined that the post did not violate its policies and restored it to the platform.

In the second case, a Facebook user in the Philippines, who describes themselves as a “digital creator” in their profile, made a post containing six videos of puppies on their public profile timeline. The post’s caption states that the user is “looking for furparents” and that they have six pure-breed puppies “open for reservation.” The user lists medical information about the puppies, their date of birth, their location and when they are available. There is no mention of price or money changing hands, but people are invited to message the posting user for more details. Each video shows one puppy, introducing them by name. The post was viewed fewer than 5,000 times. It was identified and removed by Meta’s classifiers six days after it was posted for the same reason as the first case. The user appealed to Meta and after the appeal was closed without being reviewed, the user appealed to the Board.



In reaching its decisions on these cases, the Board notes [news coverage](#) of the growing prevalence of scams on social media relating to the sale of pets, [particularly on Meta’s platforms](#). Fraudulent offers to sell animals are a [common](#) type of scam which escalated in [2020](#), with perpetrators either disappearing once they receive a victim’s money or providing a different animal than the one advertised. There are also [concerns](#) regarding the treatment and welfare of animals offered for sale online. Public comments received by the Board also raised concerns over both the potential for scams and the poor treatment of animals involved in pet sales on social media.

2. User Submissions

In the first case, the user noted in their appeal to the Board that they see countless pages on Meta’s platforms showcasing puppies and that the majority of them are not made by businesses, including posts that advertise puppies for sale with listed prices.

In the second case, the user acknowledged they were trying to sell the puppies but explained that they wanted to find them loving homes in a safe and responsible manner. They also stated that it was very important to them to find new homes for the dogs and that Facebook was a valuable resource for people looking to adopt pets.

3. Meta’s Content Policies and Submissions

1. Meta’s Content Policies

In order to “encourage safety and deter potentially harmful activities,” Meta’s [Restricted Goods and Services](#) policy prohibits “attempts by individuals, manufacturers and retailers to purchase, sell, raffle, gift, transfer or trade certain goods and services” on Facebook and Instagram. The policy rationale contains a list of restricted goods and services covered by these rules, which includes, among other things, drugs, weapons, body parts, and “endangered and protected species (wildlife and plants).”

While the policy rationale does not mention non-endangered animals, one of the rules set out below specifies that Meta does not allow “content that attempts to buy,



sell or trade live non-endangered animals” unless it falls into one of a set of listed exceptions. The exception most relevant to these cases allows posts “by a page, group or Instagram profile representing legitimate brick-and-mortar entities, including retail businesses, legitimate websites, brands or rehoming shelters, or a private individual sharing content on behalf of legitimate brick-and-mortar entities.” Another exception allows content “posted in the context of adopting, gifting, asking for, donating or rehoming live non-endangered animals, including rehoming fees for peer-to-peer adoptions,” as opposed to peer-to-peer sales. The Board notes that Meta’s [Commerce Policies](#) prohibit all animal sales on any of its services designed for commerce, including [Facebook Marketplace](#). Products listed for sale on Marketplace must comply with the Commerce Policies as well as the Community Standards and the platform’s rules specifically point out that selling animals is prohibited.

II. Meta’s Submissions

Meta stated that it distinguishes between sales by “brick-and-mortar entities” and peer-to-peer sales to “strike a balance between enabling legitimate commerce and protecting both animals and users from potential harm associated with unregulated sales.” Meta explained that scams involving peer-to-peer animal sales online are common and that it aims to reduce the likelihood of animals being sold in “an unauthorized or unsafe manner or in furtherance of online fraud” by restricting sales to those by businesses such as licensed pet breeders as well as other “brick-and-mortar entities.”

Meta explained that its moderators and classifiers look for signals to determine whether content indicates a peer-to-peer sale is being advertised or if the “brick-and-mortar” exception is applicable. These signals can be present in the content itself, the page it was posted to, or the account of the person posting it, including biographical and country information. Signals of a sale by a legitimate business include “the presence of a business name, mention of a physical storefront and the inclusion of business contact information,” and other factors. Meta explained that peer-to-peer sales often lack these signals and use more informal language.

Meta stated that the first case did not violate the policy as there is no clear indication that the puppies in the video are for sale. Additionally, Meta noted that even if the post was advertising the puppies for sale, it would be permitted because the offer is being made by a “legitimate brick-and-mortar business.” In its evaluation, Meta



determined that the page represents a breeder because there is additional information such as a business name, a physical address, a business website link, a business email address and business hours.

In the second case, however, Meta explained that both the content and the page that posted it indicated a peer-to-peer sale of non-endangered animals rather than a sale by a “brick-and-mortar” entity. Meta noted that the expressions in the caption “open for reservation,” “looking for furparents” and “reserve yours now,” and an invitation to privately message the user, all indicated an intent to sell the puppies. Meta also noted that the user described themselves in their profile as a “digital creator” with no indication of any affiliation to a breeder or other related business.

The Board asked Meta questions about how the Restricted Goods and Services policy functions, how Meta developed the policy, and how it is enforced. Meta responded to all questions.

4. Public Comments

The Oversight Board received four public comments that met [the terms for submission](#). Two of the comments were submitted from Europe and two from the United States and Canada. To read public comments submitted with consent to publish, click [here](#).

The submissions covered the following themes: the detrimental impact on animal welfare caused by allowing animal sales on social media, the links between social media advertisements for pets and scams, the difficulty of identifying responsible pet vendors online and the need for Meta to improve its enforcement of this policy.

5. Oversight Board Analysis

The Board selected this case to start to assess issues faced by small businesses which use Meta’s platforms. The Board receives many appeals describing the adverse impact of erroneous content moderation on such users' livelihoods. The Board analyzed Meta’s decisions in these cases against Meta’s content policies, values and human rights responsibilities. The Board also assessed the implications of this case for Meta’s broader approach to content governance.



5.1 Compliance With Meta’s Content Policies

Content Rules

The Board finds that the content in the first case does not violate the Restricted Goods and Services policy’s prohibition on the sale of non-endangered animals. The post did not contain an explicit offer to sell the puppies shown in the video. The only indicator that the puppies may be for sale is the inclusion of an Instagram handle that appears to be the name of a business. Even if the post did constitute an attempt to sell the puppies there were sufficient signals (such as the businesses name, address, contact information and opening hours) in the page information for the classifier or a moderator to conclude that the page represented a qualifying “brick-and-mortar” entity under Meta’s policy.

The Board finds that the content in the second case violates the policy. As Meta itself concluded, the post, which provides information a prospective buyer would expect in an advertisement, is a clear attempt to sell the puppies shown in the videos. Additionally, the post does not fall into any of the exceptions that allow attempts to sell non-endangered animals on the platform. There is no indication in the content that the user represents a “legitimate brick-and-mortar” entity or has any affiliation with one. Instead, the post uses personal pronouns and asks viewers to privately message for more details about the puppies, indicating that the advertisement was likely placed by a private individual rather than on behalf of an established business. The user’s profile states they are a “digital creator” and provides no indication that they are affiliated with any sort of “legitimate brick-and-mortar” entity like a breeder or rehoming shelter.

The Board also finds that the content does not fall into the second exception to the prohibition for adopting, gifting, donating or rehoming. The post requests that viewers “reserve” a newly born pure-breed puppy. As confirmed by the user in their appeal to the Board, the language of the post suggests that the content was posted for purposes of facilitating the sale of the puppies.

The Board notes that whereas Meta’s policy rationale and explanations indicate a desire to reduce the likelihood of its platforms being used for fraudulent purposes, the pace of enforcement in these cases does not support their intent. In addition to



being common on Meta’s platforms, scams move [quickly](#), luring victims into engaging and transferring money before they have a chance to properly assess the situation or realize they are being defrauded. The content in the first case was on Facebook for four days before being identified and reviewed by Meta’s classifiers, and the content in the second case was online for six days. While there is no indication that the users in these cases were attempting to commit fraud, delays in Meta’s assessment and enforcement process risk undermining the goals of its policy.

5.2 Compliance With Meta’s Human Rights Responsibilities

While the Board has concerns over the clarity of Meta’s rules, it finds that keeping the content up in the first case and removing the content from the platform in the second case was consistent with Meta’s human rights responsibilities.

Freedom of Expression (Article 19 ICCPR)

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ([ICCPR](#)) provides for broad protection of expression, including “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.” The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee lists specific forms of expression included within the protective scope of Article 19 and notes that the right to freedom of expression may include commercial advertising ([General Comment No. 34](#), para. 11). It goes on to cite favorably the analysis in its prior case which provided Article 19 protection to commercial speech. (Id., para. 33).

When restrictions on expression are imposed by a state, they must meet the requirements of legality, legitimate aim, and necessity and proportionality (Article 19, para. 3, ICCPR). These requirements are often referred to as the “three-part test.” The Board uses this framework to interpret Meta’s human rights responsibilities in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which Meta itself has committed to in its Corporate Human Rights Policy. The Board does this both in relation to the individual content decision under review and what this says about Meta’s broader approach to content governance. As the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression has stated, although “companies do not have the obligations of Governments, their impact is of a sort that requires them to assess the same kind



of questions about protecting their users' right to freedom of expression” ([A/74/486](#), para. 41).

1. Legality (Clarity and Accessibility of the Rules)

The principle of legality requires rules limiting expression to be accessible and clear, formulated with sufficient precision to enable an individual to regulate their conduct accordingly (General Comment No. 34, para. 25). Additionally, these rules “may not confer unfettered discretion for the restriction of freedom of expression on those charged with [their] execution” and must “provide sufficient guidance to those charged with their execution to enable them to ascertain what sorts of expression are properly restricted and what sorts are not” (ibid). The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression has stated that when applied to private actors’ governance of online speech, rules should be clear and specific (A/HRC/38/35, para. 46). People using Meta’s platforms should be able to access and understand the rules and content reviewers should have clear guidance regarding their enforcement.

While the test of legality is satisfied as it relates to these cases, the Board nevertheless finds that the prohibition on attempts to buy, sell or trade live non-endangered animals in the Restricted Goods and Services policy would benefit from further clarification. The exception allows “legitimate brick-and-mortar entities” to make those attempts. In practice, the policy is enforced in such a way that the prohibition only applies to peer-to-peer sales. In the wording of the exception, “brick-and-mortar entities” is elaborated upon with a non-exhaustive list of examples as “including retail businesses, legitimate websites, brands or rehoming shelters, or a private individual sharing content on behalf of legitimate brick-and-mortar entities.” In response to questions from the Board, Meta explained that this exception is intended to reflect the legal requirement in some jurisdictions that an entity selling animals be licensed and meet animal welfare requirements.

While Meta uses the term “brick-and-mortar” throughout the Restricted Goods and Services policy, the Board finds that its use in this context is unclear and does not meet Meta’s aim. Non-endangered animals may, for example, be raised in a domestic or hobby setting by a licensed breeder or sold through a legitimate business that works with many such breeders. It is possible that users in those situations could appear to Meta to be peer-to-peer sellers (without a “brick-and-mortar” store) despite complying with all local legal requirements regarding the sale of animals.



The term “brick-and-mortar,” which is not a common idiom across all languages and cultures, reflects an antiquated and unnecessarily rigid notion of what such a business might entail and is not a clear proxy for Meta’s intent to reference licensed or legitimate businesses. Additionally, Meta’s use of the term “brick-and-mortar” does not comport with the list of legitimate entities it offers as examples which includes businesses without physical premises. The current lack of clarity may also prevent some businesses which should benefit from the exception from properly identifying their pages and curating their posts. Without greater transparency about what the policy requires, businesses may be less likely to include information that Meta looks for to determine whether an attempt to trade in non-endangered animals should be permitted (such as business information like a physical address) when enforcing this policy.

It would be clearer if Meta stated that the rule is a prohibition on peer-to-peer attempts to buy, sell or trade live non-endangered animals for profit. Peer-to-peer should be defined to exclude the businesses currently listed in the “brick-and-mortar” exception and Meta should clarify in the policy that its intent is to only allow established businesses to attempt to buy, sell or trade non-endangered animals. Meta should continue to enforce this rule by reviewing indicative signals such as whether the business has a clearly stated name, address, contact information or other factors. The change to the policy’s language will make the rule easier to understand as well as clarify Meta’s intent to limit trade in animals to businesses that users can contact and seek redress from if needed, which helps to prevent scams and fraud.

Finally, the Board finds that the policy rationale should also be clarified. It contains a list of categories covered by the policy, which does not include non-endangered animals, instead specifying “endangered and protected species (wildlife and plants).” This may lead users who read the policy rationale to wrongly assume that this policy does not cover non-endangered animals.

II. Legitimate Aim

Any restriction on freedom of expression should also pursue one or more of the legitimate aims listed in the ICCPR, which include protecting the rights and reputations of others. In these cases, the Board finds that Meta’s prohibition on peer-to-peer pet sales pursues a legitimate aim by seeking to protect people from scams



and fraud and their impact on public order (Article 19(3) ICCPR; [General Comment 34](#), para 31; [General Comment 37](#), para 44 as well as Article 17, [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), see [AI-Manipulated Video Promoting Gambling](#) decision)).

III. Necessity and Proportionality

Under ICCPR Article 19(3), necessity and proportionality requires that restrictions on expression “must be appropriate to achieve their protective function; they must be the least intrusive instrument amongst those which might achieve their protective function; they must be proportionate to the interest to be protected” (General Comment No. 34, para. 34). The Human Rights Committee has found this to be true in respect of restrictions on commercial advertising (op. cit., at para. 33), noting a restriction on commercial speech “violates the test of necessity if the protection could be achieved in other ways that do not restrict freedom of expression.”

The Board notes that the rule is sufficiently narrowly tailored. It targets only the distinct category of posts at the point of making an offer to trade in animals for profit in peer-to-peer situations and does not restrict other forms of expression, advocacy or commentary. The Board has previously found that removal of content in order to protect users from scams can be both necessary and proportionate (see [AI-Manipulated Video Promoting Gambling](#) decision). The content in the first case was published by a business that meets the criteria for Meta’s exception and was correctly restored to the platform. The Board finds that the removal of the content in the second case is both necessary and proportionate. While there is no indication that the user in the second case was engaged in fraud, without any discernible link to a legitimate business, there is no assurance that the puppies featured in the content are in the user’s possession, as they are described, or actually available for sale. As this is a common form of scam, the Board finds that Meta can properly remove such content from its platforms in order to protect users from scams, and that such enforcement is not inconsistent with Meta’s responsibilities in relation to necessity and proportionality.

6. The Oversight Board’s Decision

The Oversight Board overturns Meta's original decision to remove the content in the first case and upholds its decision to remove the content in the second case.



7. Recommendations

Content Policy

1. To provide more clarity to users on what is not allowed under its Restricted Goods and Services policy, Meta should clarify that peer-to-peer trade in non-endangered animals for profit is prohibited and remove references to “brick-and-mortar entities” from this part of the policy. The policy should instead state that Meta applies a multi-factor test to determine what constitutes an established business permitted to sell non-endangered animals on the platform, and list several of the relevant factors.

The Board will consider this recommendation implemented when the policy is updated as described above in Meta’s Community Standards.

***Procedural Note:**

- The Oversight Board’s decisions are made by panels of five Members and approved by a majority vote of the full Board. Board decisions do not necessarily represent the views of all Members.
- Under its [Charter](#), the Oversight Board may review appeals from users whose content Meta removed, appeals from users who reported content that Meta left up, and decisions that Meta refers to it (Charter Article 2, Section 1). The Board has binding authority to uphold or overturn Meta’s content decisions (Charter Article 3, Section 5; Charter Article 4). The Board may issue non-binding recommendations that Meta is required to respond to (Charter Article 3, Section 4; Article 4). Where Meta commits to act on recommendations, the Board monitors their implementation.