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HorseCity.com Leads the Charge to Capture Online Horse Scam Artists

(Augusta, Ga) HorseCity.com officials turned over key evidence to the Federal Bureau of Investigation today. This comes two years after secretly beginning to compile valuable data from several scam artists online. The HorseCity.com "sting" netted some of the most valuable data to date in the efforts to track down these criminals.

HorseCity.com General Manager Ryan Dohrn said, "Enough is enough. We met with the Federal Bureau of Investigations today and turned over our first batch of evidence for this case. We have been tracking this activity for over two years. Today we handed over several key pieces of evidence including the actual checks being used in the scam and the other key items that we can not disclose at this time. We have a responsibility to our users to track these individuals down and bring them to justice. We will not stop working to bring this crime ring to an end!"

HorseCity.com, an AHP electronic publication member, is one of the only equine Web sites to publicly take an active stand against this activity online. Working with the Internet Fraud Complaint Center (IFCC), HorseCity.com has pushed over 1,000 complaints of fraud to the FBI. The IFCC is a partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center IFCC's mission is to address fraud committed over the Internet.

Dohrn also said, "As a whole the web is a very safe place for commerce. The old saying still stands ... if it sounds too good to be true, it is. The criminals prey on rural horse owners because we are a trusting community. We take people at their word. I have personally sold over 50 horses online without a problem from these criminals."

The scheme targets individuals that use Internet classified ads to sell merchandise. Typically an interested party located outside the United States contacts a seller. The seller is told that the buyer has an associate in the United States that owes him money. As such, he will have the associate send the seller a cashier's check for the amount owed to the buyer. This amount will be thousands of dollars more than the price of the merchandise and the seller is told the excess amount will be used to pay the shipping costs associated with getting the merchandise to his location. The seller is instructed to deposit the check, and as soon as it clears, to wire (Western Union) the excess funds back to the buyer

or to another associate identified as a shipping agent. In most instances, the money is sent to locations in West Africa (Nigeria). Because a cashier's check is used, a bank will typically release the funds immediately, or after a one or two day hold. Falsely believing the check has cleared, the seller wires the money as instructed. In some cases, the buyer is able to convince the seller that some circumstance has arisen that necessitates the cancellation of the sale, and is successful in conning the victim into sending the remainder of the money. Shortly thereafter, their bank notifies the victim that the check was fraudulent, and the bank is holding the victim responsible for the full amount of the check.

The IFCC is cautioning citizens to be wary of any purchasers proposing to conduct transactions in this manner, and to take the steps necessary to ensure that a check has fully cleared before doing anything with those funds.

Anyone who thinks they might have fallen victim to this or any other type of Internet scam can notify the IFCC through its web site at www.ifccfbi.gov.

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HorseCity.com, based in Augusta, Ga., is an award-winning equine portal Web site serving the horse owner, the horse enthusiast and the equine industry. The site operates under the auspices of Morris Digital Works, the online services division of Morris Communications Co. LLC. For more information, visit www.horsecity.com

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