So the main reason I had reached out and joined this axolotl group is because actually, my first axolotl, Sugar, passed away on Nov 29th, 2020. Obviously, I am grieving, and if I talk about him in present tense/like he's still alive, that is why. I will be the first to admit that I made a lot of newbie mistakes, but I also feel like this animal was harmed by his breeder, Ivy's Axolotls. I will try to tell this story as factually and unbiased as possible.

## **Anatomy Addendum:**

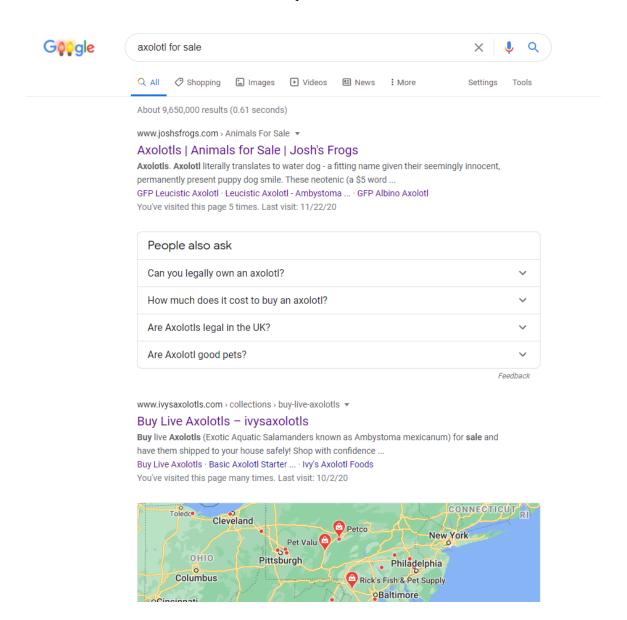
- ❖ During that time, Sugar did not grow while Spice certainly did. He seemed perpetually stuck at 6 months old (he was hatched February 2020, Ivy could not give me a specific date).
- ♦ Besides his small statue, he sexually matured very quickly. By early October, he already had a male bulge and dropped spermatophores every now and then. I had no idea about how long sexual maturity takes (Ivy said "They need to be at least 9 months old" on FB messenger). I now know that axolotls are not definitely sexed until they are 12-18 months old.
- ❖ His arm is not 'slightly deformed'. It is essentially pinned backwards to his body. He had to move like a three-legged animal, which luckily the water put less stress on his other limbs. Still, he did not 'swim around' like Spice could, and every now and then he would wander straight into the glass as if it was not there. Spice seemed to understand her perimeters while Sugar could never figure it out. It was not fun to see Sugar hit the glass full force, head-on.
- ❖ I had never seen Sugar make a solid defecation since August. I assume he had to have excreted some sort of waste since he was never compacted, but still it was odd to never see dung in Sugar's side of the tank while Spice defecated at a healthy rate.
- ❖ Lastly, he was advertised as a blue gill, but his gills were always a bright red. This did not matter to me as I did not purchase him for his morph, but his morph listing was definitely a lie to say the least, along with being 'a good eater'.

### Late June-Early August

I have always grown up with exotic pets (mostly reptiles), so their care and experience is very special to me. I knew I wanted to get another exotic animal to call my own- but what? After some research and investigating, I realized that I definitely wanted an axolotl. I also knew that I have compulsive tendencies, so I would not let myself purchase an animal for at least a month.

By late July, I discovered that you have to cycle tanks. I began that process, and in early August, began looking for my companion for the next 15 years.

I live in a small town where nowhere would sell such and animal, so of course, I googled "Axolotl for Sale" and here's what came up:

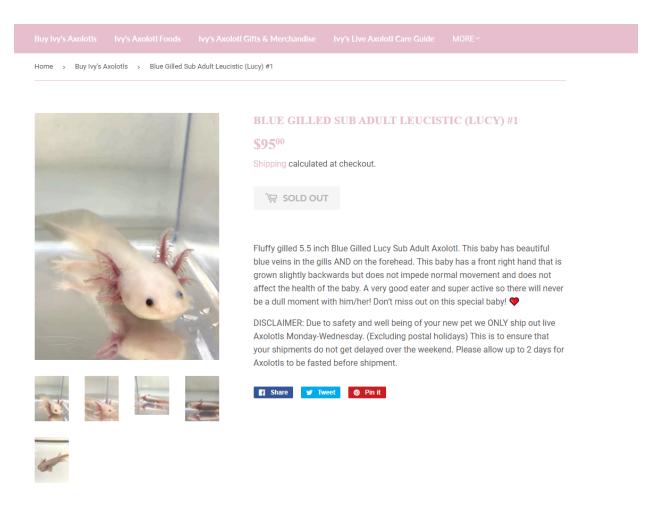


I looked at Josh's Frogs, who did not have any animals at the time. Personally, I did not like how the animals were listed as 'products' and it seemed impersonal. I knew I wanted to get my pet from someone who showed as much individualistic care about their creatures as much as I did. So I went to the next site, Ivy's Axolotls.

### July 29, 2020

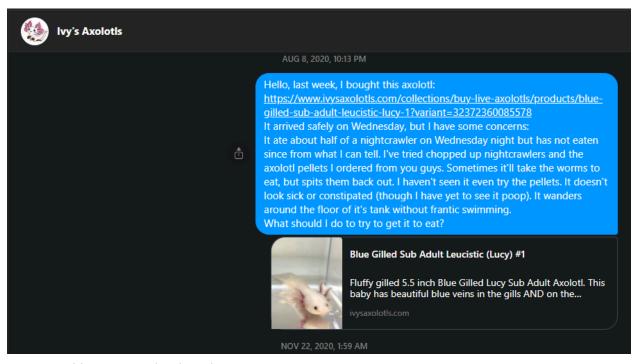
I placed the order for my first ever Axolotl. I didn't need a mosaic, but I wanted my animal to be special to me. I saw this little fella for sale and knew that he had to be mine.

So why would I purposely choose a deformed animal? Well, I am disabled as well. Not enough to affect the quality of care of my animals, but enough to affect my day-to-day life and education. I also worked at an animal shelter for four years so I am very passionate about adopting and caring for unconventional animals (i.e. old or in poor health). Now I know, I will never purchase an animal like this (only rehoming rescues) and that this sale played on that sympathetic factor. Had it not been me, it would have been someone else for possibly similar reasons.



He mailed out Monday, August 3, and arrived Wednesday, August 5. There was absolutely no communication from the breeder besides the automated tracking messages. I had found this odd that the breeder did not even check that I could care for a special needs animal. Anyways, he arrived and I was happy.

As with many axolotls, he refused to eat when he first arrived. I obviously did not know this, but I was still distressed that an animal I had gotten had not eaten in a week (fasting + shipping + three days with me) when I had known they should be eating daily.



I contacted her on Facebook and never got a response.

So I copy and pasted the same message to their instagram, and I did get a response there the following day. Take these for what you will. Remember, I was completely new to this so I had no idea what the numbers truly meant for an axolotl:

August 9, 2020 2:25 am

Hi there! Thank you for reaching out to us. Have you checked your water parameters? Your ammonia/nitrate levels might be too high



August 9, 2020 6:38 am

Tha ammonia was at about 0.75 ppm so I completely switched out the water. While I was doing so, I had the axolotl in a smaller container and he took a poop while in there. Should I try feeding him this evening? He didn't take any food after pooping

August 9, 2020 1:50 pm

What's the temperature you house it in?

Yes you should try feeding him in the smaller tub. And how do you feed the pellets? The way to feed the pellets is to drop them right at it's mouth. It won't know to eat if you just drop them in the tub



I had the temp at about 69 earlier this week but I was able to lower it to 65

I will try that method with the pellets this evening, I had just been putting them randomly in the tank like fish food

Axolotls have very weak sense of smell and eye sight so they won't know where the food is unless you hand feed them soak the pellets in water for a couple minutes to soften them, then drop on their mouth and they'll eat like that

Yes below 67 is ideal, the high temperature might be the reason why she wasn't eating as well



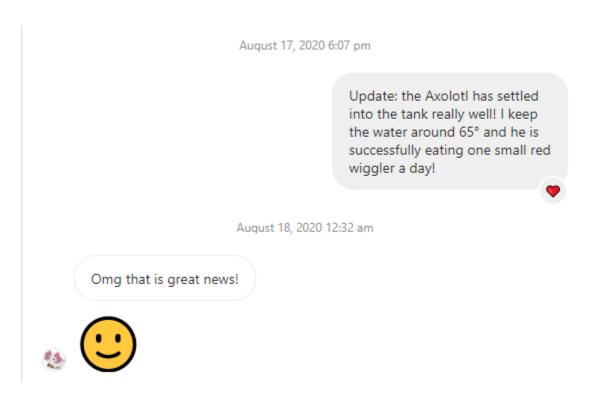
August 9, 2020 4:08 pm

He took a small red wiggler with a little hesitation, but he ate it without spitting it back out. Thank you for your advice! I will ensure that the axolotl has better water conditions so he can eat



## Aug 17, 2020

Small update. So far everything seems okay. I thought the thrashing was normal-like how some lizards violently attack their prey. My thoughts on this would soon change after my Axanthic axolotl, Spice/Dutchess arrived (she was bought from <a href="here">here</a> for about \$60 plus shipping)



## September 8, 2020

Now I had another axolotl to compare Sugar to. I really wanted them to be tankmates, but I had to place a divider between them because Spice was growing bigger than Sugar and starting to bully him (I never saw it but he had obvious nips which were worrying). Every now and then, he wouldn't eat, but at this time he had completely stopped eating for multiple days and I hated watching this animal suffer. I contacted Ivy again with my concerns that Sugar just could not eat like Spice could.



September 8, 2020 9:36 pm

Hi! The axolotl I got from you guys is still struggling to eat. I had gotten another axolotl (they're separated since they're still young so they won't cause problems). The other one I had gotten eats very easily, one worm a day, and doesn't struggle to eat it. The one I got from you guys sometimes eats, sometimes doesn't eat. And when it does eat, it violently thrashes and struggles to get a very small red wiggler down. It'll spit up and reswallow the worm multiple times, and sometimes will reject the worm after several attempts at eating it. I offer it one worm a day at the same time as the other one, every day. This axolotl hasn't eaten in about 4 days now, is starting to look super skinny compared to the other one/health axolotls in general. The water conditions are kept the same, cool and clean. What can I do? Is this axolotl suffering from a neurological disorder? It was born with that deformed arm and a slightly deformed frill, so could that be a sign of a genetic disorder?

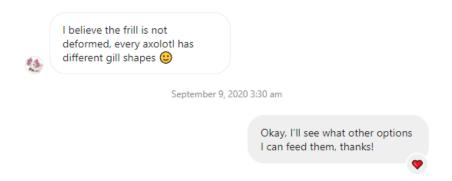
Hi! From what I've observed

# ivysaxolotls

Hi! From what I've observed from owning a lot of axolotls, every axolotl is different. I have adults that will eat twice a week and refuse to eat any more, but completely healthy. And I have some that want to eat everyday, twice a day if I'd let them. The way you described the axolotl eating is actually very common. That usually means they don't like the food you're offering them. I have adults that won't touch red wigglers but will eat earthworms right away and vice verse. I have some that will only eat them if I blanch the worms beforehand (Put the worms in hot water for a few minutes until they stop moving). So at every feeding, I memorize their preferences and feed each one accordingly. Just like with humans, axolotls can be picky and have their own likes and dislikes.

You could try cutting the red wiggler in half since it might be too big for the axolotl's liking. Then blanch both halves in hot water, then feed it. This usually does the trick for me when dealing with picky eaters.

I believe the frill is not deformed, every axolotl has



This animal had refused all food options so far (pellets, nightcrawlers, red wigglers), so I had to take to the internet and figure out other options.

I stumbled across this article, and I felt like this was the only option I had left. Funny enough, he took to the chicken without thrashing or vomiting it back up! This is the only food he would accept. I was feeding him organic boiled chicken, following the instructions on the article, while feeding Spice a mix of the two. The 'bad feeding days' went from once every three days to at least once a week. I truly thought all would be well with my small axolotl. And from September to last week, it was.

#### **November 21, 2020**

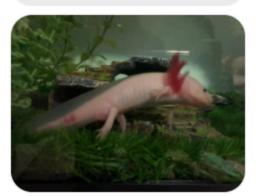
Tragedy strikes. I made a huge mistake that I regret immensely and would give anything to undo. I had been doing some cleaning the night before and had the lid off to do this. I was tired, and went to bed forgetting to put the lid back on. The next morning, I found that Sugar had jumped out of the aquarium and dried up on the carpet floor. I have no idea how long he was there. I put him back in the aquarium immediately. He was still alive, but not doing well. Very scared for his well-being, I contacted Ivy, who took three days to respond. These three days felt like living hell because I did not know how to help my animal besides some internet research.

By the 22nd, I had fridged Sugar because he was not doing well on his own. He seemed to be paralyzed, alive but barely able to move. I ordered Almond leaves (which I now know to always keep on hand), and put Seachem Stress Guard in the tub water he was in. All of this I had to come up with for myself, and I still feel like I did not do enough. As a breeder, what would you have done if I had reached out to you? This is the only rudimentary advice I received from Ivy:

(trigger warning, images of a very injured axolotl)

November 21, 2020 5:16 pm

Hello, I adopted this axolotl from you over the summer. He is nine months at this time. This morning I found him on the floor on the carpet. I have no idea how long he was on the floor. He ate really well In the middle of the night. He has some injuries to his tail and right leg. Do you have any suggestions to facilitate his healing?





November 22, 2020 1:58 am



November 22, 2020 1:58 am

Hello? Please I'm really worried about this. I'm going to take him to the vet tomorrow but we don't have any specialists where I live

November 24, 2020 4:55 am

Hi! The wound should heal with time as long as you keep feeding him and change out his water, make sure his water is clean

Sorry for the late reply! We have been getting more inquiries and are trying our best to response promptly, thank you for your understanding!



Ok thank you

Seen

The vet, who was not a specialist, could not do much. All she recommended was that I let him rest and watch him recover for a few days. I was on my own with nothing but the internet to help me.

I had been fridging him this whole time, and his state was questionable for most of the week. I have an extra fridge so I was able to keep him at an ideal 5C, doing water changes once a day in the evening. I only checked on him in the morning and at night so he would have minimal stress. Of course, he was not eating. I had expected this though because he won't eat in a healthy state, nonetheless this state. If two weeks had come up without him eating, I would have started force feeding liquid food with a syringe.

By the time I had joined Axolotl Central, I thought he was going to be okay. I would have messaged you guys to assess him before I began the process of moving him back to the tank. He wasn't overly active and hadn't eaten, but he seemed to at least be alive and recovering. I really had a lot of faith in Axolotl rejuvenation.

On the morning of Nov 29, I found him dead. I was not even really sure he was dead- he was just not moving with his mouth open. I had to extensively research what a dead Axolotl is even like since he did not bloat/float immediately. But with the pale colors, open mouth, and scent of death, I realized it was over. This whole process was VERY traumatizing, and I felt like Ivy had been of no help. I don't even know what was the specific cause of death. I also will never know if he could have survived had he been a stronger, healthier axolotl.

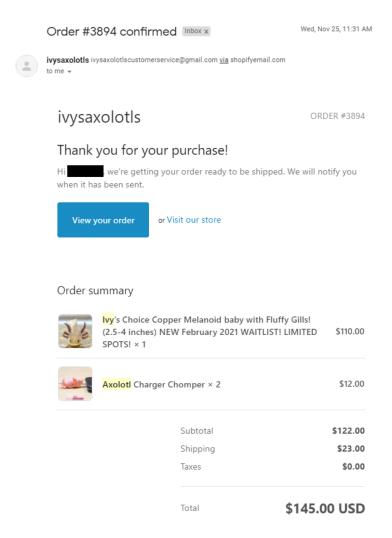
## One last purchase, and possibly no refund:

In the height of grief, I decided to get another axolotl. I had been growing my family beyond just Sugar and Spice (now renamed Dutchess so I don't have to remember this trauma), so I have the resources and room. I had purchased one of <u>these babies</u>, which I immensely regret. Ivy is notorious for not giving refunds to people for any reason. I won't even ask for a refund because that will likely go nowhere. Also, after seeing many other mel coppers, this animal is severely overpriced (as was Sugar).

## **December 13, 2020**

While this does not have to do with the conditions of a live animal (thank god), it DOES have to do with being scammed for overpricing.

On November 25th, I had bought a slot for a Copper Melanoid that will be sent on Feb 2021. This is my order confirmation:



Okay let's get past the fact that the animal is insanely overpriced as is. Note that it is \$110. Soon, the 'product' slot I bought that from disappeared. I could not find proof of it ever existing- which yeah, some sellers clear sold out products, but Ivy's website has plenty of sold out products left up. This is not inherently wrong. What got me was I noticed that this reappeared a few days ago:







IVY'S CHOICE COPPER MELANOID BABY WITH FLUFFY GILLS! (2.5-4 INCHES)(RARE) NEW FEBRUARY 2021 WAITLIST! LIMITED SPOTS!

\$14500 You save 9%

Shipping calculated at checkout.

□ ADD TO CART

One fluffy gilled Copper Melanoid axolotl individually hand-picked by our staff just for you Great Ivy's Axolotls quality but at a discount!

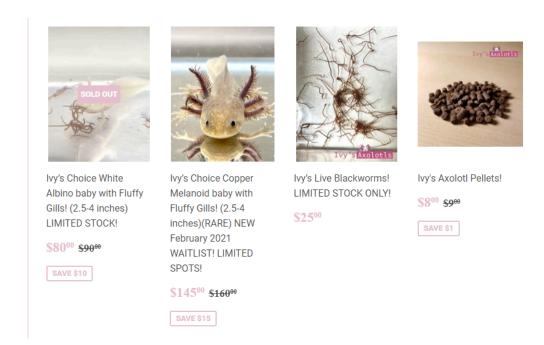
DISCLAIMER: Due to safety and well being of your new pet we ONLY ship out live Axolotls Monday-Wednesday. (Excluding postal holidays) This is to ensure that your shipments do not get delayed over the weekend. Please allow up to 2 days for Axolotls to be fasted before shipment.

DISCLAIMER #2: Picture shown is for display purposes only. Actual picture of axolotl sent out not shown.

DISCLAIMER #3: AxolotIs can lighten up in color due to the shipping process temporarily but will return to normal color soon after arrival. To speed up the process, put axolotI on dark substrate.

DISCLAIMER #4: Orders with waitlisted items will ship all together on the waitlisted month unless you would like to request and pay for separate shipping.

This is the SAME exact offering, that magically reappeared at a higher price? These will be the same exact animals, whether you buy them at \$110, \$145, or \$160. Which yes, \$160 is the new base price that this animal was meant to be sold at, though it is discounted at the moment:



That is extremely suspicious. I may not have been scammed any money, but I do not like that this suddenly appeared. I am going to attempt to ask for a refund. If Ivy refuses, I will:

- 1. Be recording EVERYTHING
- 2. File it with my credit card company

I will keep this document updated, even if the transaction goes over easy.

This is an archive of Ivy Axolotls' T.O.S. as of Dec 13, 2020: Terms of Service

## **December 18, 2020**

It did not go over well. This will be the last update, seeing that this is the absolute last time I ever do business with this individual. Here are my initial messages from 12/13/20:



## ivysaxolotls



Sunday 6:22pm

## Good evening,

I am currently raising newborn axolotls. They are a lot of work and room, but I love them! I am letting you know this, because I no longer feel like I have the proper resources and time to take on another animal as a pet.

On Nov 25, I had purchased a slot for one of the Copper Melanoids that will be shipped out in Feb 2021. I would like a refund for it please. The animals were priced \$110 at the time I got one. If I can't get a full refund, I will be filing a chargeback through my credit card company. I cannot afford to just lose \$110 for no reason at this moment.

My order number is #3894. You can keep on the phone chargers if you'd like- whatever is more convenient for you. I mainly need the animal refunded. Thank you for your business.



Sunday 7:55pm

I have read your TOS extensively. Even though I do not agree with it, I can live with a 75% refund. Please just don't give me a hassle on this. That's really the last thing I need rn. I would rather talk things out than fight things out:/

I have archived your TOS as of this day, so I recommend not changing anything. I will only work with the T.O.S. that is stated on Dec 13, 2020, as it is the T.O.S. that exists at my time of purchase and refund.

I will give you until Tuesday, Dec 15, to refund me before I file a credit card chargeback. I do not mind if you blacklist me, because after researching your business ethics, seeing various bewares, and learning about the deplorable state my overpriced animal, Sugar, was sold in, I am no longer comfortable buying live animals from you. It's a damn shame.

#### Hi there Dakota!

We are sorry to hear that you no longer have the resources to care for your future pet :/ We do understand that unforeseen events can happen.

I will put in a request that should be able to get your refund started right away according to our policy U It will take about 2-3 business days for the request to be processed and you should be receiving an email confirmation of the cancellation.

Thank you for reaching out to us and happy holidays!



Okay, thank you so much! I will keep an eye out for that. Thank you for understanding



So far, everything sounded easy. I was very straightforward with my intent, and Ivy accepted to give me a refund. I waited until the end of today, Friday, to give her a chance to actually refund me on her terms. I have combed extensively through my email and transactions, where no such refund exists. I have filed a dispute with my credit card company and extensively explained the case to them. I don't necessarily care about the outcome of the case- I got my money back and I have sent a message.

Alright, I might be a young, inexperienced adult, but I did not get into a very competitive pre-law program at a top American university because I'm stupid. I can see that you are just dragging this out. I don't play around like the other shmucks who've gone along with your BS. I already filed refunds with my credit card company. You can blacklist me; it is no threat to me. I do not want any further contact or business with you. Good day.

You blocked ivysaxolotls. Delete chat.

### A Last Message to Ivy:

Let's cover your behavior, both in ethics and in law. This is my area of study, and I think other customers deserve to see a transparent investigation into the matter.

Legalities: So have you committed a crime?

- → Refunds: In Washington State, "there's no right to cancel contracts or purchase agreements. Whether you can receive a refund is dependent on the retailer's return and refund policies." (Consumer FindLaw).
- → Animal Treatment: Due to their niche status, axolotls do not have many laws protecting them, and none in Washington. While you have not committed any crimes in the eyes of the law, I recommend that you consider adopting these findings regarding dog breeding into your practice (RCW 16.52.310):
  - ◆ Dogs are neither a commercial crop nor commodity and should not be indiscriminately or irresponsibly mass-produced\*\*\*
  - ◆ Large-scale dog breeding increases the likelihood that the dogs will be denied their most basic needs including but not limited to: Sanitary living conditions, proper and timely medical care, the ability to move freely at least once per day, and adequate shelter from the elements
  - ◆ Without proper oversight, large-scale breeding facilities can easily fall below even the most basic standards of humane housing and husbandry
  - ◆ An unfair fiscal burden is placed on city, county, and state taxpayers as well as government agencies and nongovernmental organizations, which are required to care for discarded or abused and neglected dogs from large-scale breeding facilities.

Ethics: So you may not have committed any actual crimes (though I will keep investigating to verify that claim), but you have carried your brand in such a manner, that any business ethics specialist would cringe:

- → Refunds: any refund should be a case by case situation and effortless to process, as is standard with most corporate American businesses. Refunds should also be given in 100% return if a product was not shipped or received. Your 75% policy permits you to profit off of people's mistakes and misfortune. Your behavior of dragging out refunds and making the pursuit of refund difficult is CLEARLY to deter people from duking it out with you. You're just another bully who wormed their way into the business world. "Treating consumers in such a fashion may or may not be 'illegal' by the strictest of definitions. But it certainly is galling if it's done by a company that plans to seek even one dime of the bailout money approved by Congress. And it's beyond stupid if it's done by a company that, once this is all over, expects consumers to forget how they are treated, individually or collectively, when everyone was facing the biggest, most frightening challenge to their health and wealth in their lifetimes." (Forbes, in reference to refusing refunds)
- → Animal Treatment: I am not even going to cite or quote any references, because this part can be written out of common sense. Many animals you have sold have had decent health & genetics and live decent lives. Multiple have not, as seen on Facebook's Axolotl Buyer & Seller Beware (you're so special, the admins made their own section just for you), and while not only putting the human owners in distress, you are putting severe pain & suffering on these innocent animals just to make a dime. I won't even get into how your overpricing harms other breeders and fuels your apparent greed, since the ethics tied behind a free market are always debatable. I cannot factually prove under a court of law your husbandry process as I have never visited the facility where you house your animals. I can see plenty of circumstantial evidence from how people have received sick or dying animals (including myself), that indicates you just might not be prioritizing ethical and humane husbandry. Sure, there might be 100 animals sold in good health for every sick or dying animal, but you cannot ignore your dying population in good faith. Business law is not my particular interest, and I would never make a fuss like this for any materialistic item. These are LIVING animals. They have sentience. They can feel pain. They don't understand why they are gambling for quality of life.

This is not a one-time incident, Ivy. I even gave you a chance to resolve this with ease. You have consistently displayed this unethical behavior with dozens of innocent people and animals. I know you will not stop until someone finally files a lawsuit against you or convinces you to cease this practice. What small business has multitudes of bewares against it and carries on like it means nothing? This isn't about me; this is about every voiceless animal that lived a short & painful life due to bad genetics/husbandry and every innocent person who wants to invest in one of the world's most fascinating and fragile animals. My interest IS civil and animal rights, and if I can ever push forward legislation protecting exotic amphibians and reptiles, I will keep this stark experience with you in the foreground of my mind at all times.

There is no intended libel in any statement I have made here or anywhere public. Degrading people is not really in my best interest.

I would rather educate others and assist them in making the most ethical & beneficial decisions possible, including Ivy.