

Paper Training for purebred dog buyers

What is a purebred dog?

Purebred means that the sire and dam of a dog are members of a recognized breed and that the ancestry of a dog consists of the same breed over many generations. A “purebred” dog is the result of years of selective breeding; choosing dogs of a certain body type, temperament and appearance in order to create a line of dogs that are nearly identical. The purpose of this selection is to have a type of dog that functions most effectively for a specific job. Through generations of careful selection changes have been made in the basic canine form to accommodate the special jobs that humans use dogs to help them with, such as hunting, herding livestock, or guarding property. The terms *random-bred dog*, *mutt*, and *mongrel* are often used for dogs that result from breeding without the supervision or planning of humans, especially after several generations, whereas the terms *mixed breed* and *crossbreed* often imply mixes of known breeds, sometimes deliberately mated.

What is a dog registry?

Farmers have kept records of their breeding stock for hundreds of years in order to improve their cattle, sheep and horses. The best was bred to the best in order to create the biggest beef or most productive milk cows, the finest wool in sheep, and the fastest or strongest horses. Hundreds of years ago men began to exhibit their livestock and race their horses, offering prizes to the owner of the animals judged best in show. During the 1800’s men began exhibiting their dogs as well as horses and other livestock, and clubs were formed to organize these events and to keep track of the entries and prizes awarded. The records of the ancestors and progeny of the dogs involved in these shows are kept by the kennel club.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) is an example of a purebred dog registry. (see www.akc.org for information) The AKC is actively involved in protecting the welfare of purebred dogs registered by its members, and is the only purebred dog registry in the U.S. that conducts inspections of kennels and may fine or even suspend the privileges of members who do not keep their kennels and records up to standards.

What is a parent club?

Each separate breed of dog has its parent club, made up of breeders and judges whose purpose is to maintain the purity of the breed that they love. Standards are written by the parent club for each breed, describing the perfect specimen of that breed of dog. The Parent club maintains the breed standard, and works to keep the breed true to its original form and function. Part of their job is to maintain the stud books of their breed, keeping the records of which dog is bred to which bitch, and tracking the offspring of these dogs as they enter shows or other competitions, produce offspring of their own, and pass on into ancestry.

What are registration papers?

Registration papers for purebred dogs are the breeder’s promise that the dogs listed on the papers are the parents and ancestors of the puppy named in the papers. Registration papers are mostly based on the honor system, with the breeder promising that the dogs that he says are the parents are indeed the parents of the puppy named in the papers. Modern science has added the DNA profile to insure that frequently used animals are on file with the registering organization, and can be scientifically proven to be the parents of puppies as stated by the breeder.

Are all registration papers of equal value?

The only purpose for registration papers is to state that the dog is the offspring of recognized ancestors of a certain breed. No dog registry guarantees the physical or temperamental quality of the puppy that is being registered, nor does any dog registry guarantee the health of a registered dog.

Throughout the nation there are dog breeders who produce multitudes of puppies, usually wholesale for transport to pet shops or selling retail as pet shops of their own. These high volume, commercial dog breeders are often termed “puppy mills” because their interest is in producing numbers of “units” for sale with little attention paid to the quality of the animals that are being produced, and very little attention paid to the wellbeing of the adult breeding stock that produces the puppies. Puppy mills usually produce poorly bred puppies, sometimes barely resembling the breed they represent, frequently suffering from health problems. The physical conditions found in puppy mills are often filthy and crowded, resulting in disease and illness for the puppies that are trucked nationwide to pet shops.

What about dog registries other than AKC?

Many high volume dog breeders have been unable or unwilling to live up to the basic standards set by the American Kennel Club (AKC) for proper care and proper recordkeeping for purebred dogs. These volume breeders have started their own “breed registries”. These registries will register dogs for breeders who have been suspended from the AKC (usually for serious offenses ranging from conviction on animal neglect or cruelty charges to improper or false record keeping or major kennel sanitation violations), and they will register dogs that other registries won't. Some volume breeders work with multiple registries, and even charge differently for pups depending on which registry the pup is recorded with. There is no honest reason for this practice. These lesser quality registries are sometimes referred to as “paper mills for puppy mills”.

Some dog registries will allow the registration of designer mutts, sometimes called "new rare breeds", for breeding purposes. Puppy buyers are sometimes fooled into paying hundreds of dollars for a "registered" mutt. Being a registered mutt does not make a dog any different from a similar one sitting in an animal shelter, and it certainly does not turn a mutt into a purebred. Any registration can often cause the price of a mutt to skyrocket, when the paper it's printed on may only be worth using for housebreaking.

Many volume dog breeders are unhappy now that the AKC has stricter rules, and is requiring a DNA profile in stud dogs that produce 7 or more litters in a lifetime or more than 3 litters in a year. Many of these volume breeders are breaking away from the AKC and now register their dogs with less restrictive registries. Regardless of where you get your pup, if your pup is registered with anything other than the AKC, the CKC (Canadian Kennel Club, which is very similar to the AKC) or the United Kennel Club, the chances of your pup being bred by an irresponsible breeder rises dramatically. It's up to you, the potential puppy buyer, to educate yourself and to avoid being part of the puppy mill problem.

Some things to look for when investigating a dog registry / kennel club web site:

- * Encouragement of health testing (beyond just a vet check), screening for genetic defects (such as OFA, CERF, etc.), and DNA profiling for breeding stock.
- * Different levels of registrations available, such as *limited registration* for dogs not to be used for breeding, which require spay/neuter certificates as a condition of the contract.
- * Every breed must have a standard, a "parent" breed club who sets that standard, and make sure that the parent club consists of more than a couple of breeders.
- * Encouragement of spay and neuter for mixed breeds and purebreds who do not meet their breed or working standards.
- * Breeders are encouraged to prove that their dogs meet their breed's standards in the conformation or trial ring.
- * The kennel club has or sponsors shows and trials where the dog's qualities can be proven, for all breeds.
- * Breeders are encouraged to carefully plan breeding, sell pups to carefully checked and appropriate homes, and participate in rescuing at least dogs of their own breeding and breed.
- * Has a code of ethics, or encourages breeders to join breed clubs that have a code of ethics.
- * Emphasizes improving the breeds, not just selling dogs.
- * The atmosphere is about the welfare and enjoyment of dogs, not classified ads and money.

Red Flags!!!! Be careful of kennel club / dog registry sites that:

- * Recognize mixed breeds (such as Cockapoo or Labradoodle) for breeding purposes.
- * Are founded around a single new breed that someone has recently "created", often not even set in breed type or with vague standards - that can mean the breed isn't "breeding true".
- * Offer no competitions to prove the dogs' qualities or has links to competition pages that go nowhere or hold bogus "competitions".
- * Offer no education about genetic health testing / screening, and none or very few of the breeders seem to know what it is.
- * Offer no limited registrations for dogs determined to be less than breed quality.
- * Has large advertising sections for breeders, and most ads don't mention health clearances beyond a vet check, if at all.
- * Lists private breeders as "breed clubs", or breed clubs that are composed of a very small group of just a few breeders.
- * Has breed standards that are missing or have very, very broad descriptions - this can cover up the fact that the dogs are really mutts. Multiple breed standards recognized by a single registry, for a single breed, can cover up lots of problems too.
- * The so-called "kennel clubs" are supported mainly by a pet store, pet store chain, or other special interest group whose interest may not be the welfare of dogs, but the welfare of their wallets.
- * These "registries" place too much emphasis on what the registration certificate looks like ("includes a gold seal for only \$5 more")

LOOK BEYOND THE INITIALS!!!

Clubs that have the same or similar initials to more reputable clubs are meant to confuse people who haven't done their homework. UKC can be United Kennel Club or Universal Kennel Club, CKC can be Canadian Kennel Club or Continental Kennel Club, FIC can easily be confused with FCI, etc....

For more information or if you have questions about a breed or dog registry, contact the American Kennel Club at www.akc.org, or Cape Cod Kennel Club at www.capecodkc.org.