

# Thinking of buying a pedigree dog?

We've set out some simple Q&As to help puppy buyers understand what 'pedigree' stands for, and more importantly, what it doesn't.

## What is a pedigree dog?

A pedigree dog is the offspring of two dogs of the same breed, which is eligible for registration with a recognised club or society that maintain a register for dogs of that description. There are a number of pedigree dog registration schemes, of which the Kennel Club is the most well known.

## What does Kennel Club registration stand for?

The Kennel Club's registration system is simply a record of a puppy's birth. Around 250,000 puppies are registered on the Kennel Club's breed register every year.

## How does a Kennel Club registered pedigree dog differ from a non Kennel Club registered dog?

The Kennel Club states on its website that the benefits to new owners of purchasing a Kennel Club registered pedigree dog are that they will know it should display the characteristics of the breed, in both looks and temperament.

## Could a puppy bred on a puppy farm be registered with the Kennel Club?

In the case of commercial breeders (those who breed five or more litters a year), puppies can be Kennel Club registered provided they can produce a licence issued by the local authority and meet the criteria for registration.

However, the RSPCA is concerned that the standards of care and the environment in which puppies are bred on 'puppy farms', even licensed establishments, vary considerably between local authorities, despite legislation and model licensing conditions being in place.

In addition, due to lack of resources some local authorities may not have the necessary expertise to assess breeding establishments from an animal welfare point of view and therefore fall below what the RSPCA would consider to be an acceptable standard.

This means that some Kennel Club registered puppies that have been bred in commercial breeding establishments may not have been bred to the standards of care that would be expected of a responsible breeder.

You can find out more about [Kennel Club registration](#) on their website.

### **Does Kennel Club registered mean that I'm getting a puppy from a responsible breeder?**

Being Kennel Club registered does not mean that the breeder is responsible, neither will it guarantee that you are buying a healthy, happy puppy. In fact, the Kennel Club has a second tier of registration, called the Assured Breeders Scheme (ABS), for which membership is based on breeders meeting a set of criteria that the Kennel Club deems to be an indicator of responsible breeding. There are approximately 7,500 breeders registered with the ABS, which equates to a small percentage of the total number of puppies registered with the Kennel Club every year.

### **Does the RSPCA recommend the Assured Breeders Scheme?**

The RSPCA is pleased that the Kennel Club is trying to protect and support responsible breeders. But we cannot currently endorse the Kennel Club's Assured Breeders Scheme because we do not feel the criteria is stringent enough and neither are there sufficient checks on breeders registered with the scheme to ensure they are meeting the health and welfare of their dogs. The current standards set out for the Assured Breeder Scheme are roughly the minimum standards that the RSPCA would like to see as the criteria for all pedigree dog registrations.

### **Why are there so many advertisements for puppies for sale that use the term Kennel Club registered if it does not stand for much?**

The RSPCA believes that the term 'Kennel Club registered' is being used by breeders and traders as a marketing tool used to sell puppies because people believe it stands for quality.

### **How do I buy a puppy from a responsible breeder?**

Before buying a puppy, pedigree or otherwise, it's vital to do your homework first.

This includes:

- finding out where and how the puppy was bred
- making sure you see a puppy with its mother in the place where it was bred

Read our guide on what to check when you're [choosing a puppy](#).

Because many dogs have been bred to look a certain way, many suffer from serious health and welfare issues. Therefore it's important to select a dog that's free from exaggerations. Read our [fact sheet about dogs with exaggerated features](#).

In addition, a responsible breeder should want to know as much about you as you do about them and how they've bred the puppy.