

# About Dog Registrations

*Caveat Emptor – Let the Buyer Beware...*

The canine market is flooded with bargain basement, low-end cheap papered, genetically inferior, poor and inbred dogs with health and temperament issues. Iowa is considered one of the worst states in the nation for puppy mills. This opinion document has been written to share the thoughts of many breeders who have been confronting the issues addressed in this paper.

In the dictionary, a “registration” is defined or means, a record is made of something. Few people would think any vehicle is good simply just because it's registered. Most people would shop for a type of vehicle that would suit them, is in good shape mechanically, looks good, and is recognizable by make and model, is in safe condition, and sells for good price. Just the fact that the car is registered is NOT a main selling point. However calling a vehicle an automobile or car that is actually a 3 wheel motorcycle cannot be properly registered by a legitimate authority. Just as there are standards as to vehicles, there are breed standards for dogs. While not claiming to be an expert, breeders are posting pictures of supposed purebred domestic and foreign-born German Shepherd Dogs that do not even meet recognized breed standards!

So what are all these dog registry abbreviations in dog ads? Breeders who don't know better, or are just plain irresponsible often thinking it's a license to breed their dogs. Owners who have a purebred dog think it is appropriate to breed them just because they are registered purebreds. In those cases, puppy buyers often think they're getting something special when they're not. There are many unscrupulous, puppy mills and backyard or ignorant breeders out there ready to make a buck. Unlike cars where there is a government entity licensing and registering them - only one registry per state, there are many private registries for dogs. The American Kennel Club (AKC) is the largest and most well-known registry in the United States, but they are not alone.

## **Some American Dog Registries:**

In the United States the American Kennel Club (AKC), Universal Kennel Club International, United Kennel Club, Canadian Kennel Club, Continental Kennel Club, American Purebred Registry, America's Pet Registry, Inc., and American Canine Association come immediately to mind, but there are others. One registry is the German Shepherd SV.

## **Foreign Dog Registries:**

The American market is flooded with foreign dog registries with titles that are legitimate, authentic, and real. However, there are also those that are unverifiable, rip-offs, as well as outright frauds and scams. The first question one might ask is whether the foreign registry is universally accepted by other international legitimate registering authorities as the American Kennel Club or the Canadian Kennel Club in North America.

Many try to research some of these foreign registries online. Usually a reasonable and prudent person cannot make informed decisions on some of these foreign registries as they are simply unknowns. Some are relatively new and recent organizations, not verifiable, and their information is not in English. Yet for example in Germany, the legitimate official German Shepherd SV organization is extremely regulated, guards their reputation, and would never tolerate the nonsense that goes on in America and other countries in the rest of the world!

## **What is a registry?**

First and foremost, dog registries keep records about dogs. A registry will record information such as the dog's name, breed, color, who owns him. They will track this information with a registration number microchip or tattoo. These records usually also include a pedigree, and any titles earned by any of the dogs involved. It is becoming necessary to now include DNA profiles. These records are sometimes collectively known as a dog's "registration, profiles, or papers."

There are multi-breed registries such as the AKC, and single breed registries. Most registries started for one breed, or group of dogs. Over 100 years ago, AKC started sporting dogs. ASCA still registers only Australian Shepherds, but allows all dogs to compete in their trials. There are still many one-breed clubs that are quite reputable.

Some multi-breed clubs are one-breed clubs in disguise; they have started because they want to promote a single breed. This "breed" is often a mix, then these registries "recognize" all the other breeds. You can usually detect this by being at least a bit familiar with breed names, and checking out any unfamiliar breeds on their "recognized breeds" lists. The more reputable one-breed clubs are not for profit and have formed in order to improve and act as guardians of the breed, educate the public and improve the breed, support research, and improve the general health of the breed. They are not just to make money selling dogs such as the non-profit German Shepherd Dog of America.

There are some registries such as AMBOR (American Mixed Breed Obedience Registry), which do not register dogs for breeding purposes at all - a dog must be spayed or neutered - but only record trial results and titles only. Some registries have formed to cater to a specific special interest group, such as a commercial breeders association, or a pet store chain. Good registries also have programs and information available to help dogs have better lives. While all are private corporations, the better ones are usually non-profit.

There are many AKC purebred registered dogs that do not physically meet "breed standards." There is no guarantee of good health or temperament either. For example, there are purebred German Shepherd breeders that have developed lines through their breeding programs that produce dogs over twice the size as their breed standard, and with health faults and issues.

## **What types of registrations are there?**

There are often different types of registrations available with some registries. A Litter Registration is a temporary record, to be later replaced by a full or limited registration. For a full registration, the registry will keep records of this dog's pups, and this dog's pups can be registered too providing both the parents are registered purebreds.

A dog with a limited registration is either not supposed to be bred, or the registry will not register pups from either of the dog's parents. This means that pups cannot be registered if either of their parents have a limited registration. An AKC limited registration can easily be converted to a full registration if the breeder allows it. Many wonderful dogs are now being sold on limited registrations. Breeders do this to protect the quality of their lines, as they have personal pride and reputation in their lines, and it helps prevent

"faults or possible health risk" dogs, or dogs who end up with less than responsible owners from being bred. A breeder can refuse to convert the limited registration to a full registration if they don't feel either the dog or the situation is a good one or for their breeding program. This in NO way means there's one thing wrong with the dog or owner, it's just a safeguard against possible future possibilities and problems and this limitation is reversible. There are also other limited registrations where the dog must be spayed or neutered, and this provides a way for owners of dogs with unknown pedigrees to compete in AKC events with other purebred dogs.

### **What is a pedigree?**

A pedigree is a record of a dog's ancestors. If all of the ancestors are of the same breed, then the dog is considered purebred. If the dog's ancestors are not all of the same breed, that dog still has ancestors that can be recorded and a pedigree can still be completed. But, in such cases, the dog would not be purebred, even though it has a pedigree. Having a pedigree only means a dog's ancestors are known, not that the dog is purebred. Some breeders count on buyer ignorance, and sell mutts as if they were purebreds, saying they are "pedigreed."

### **What is a title?**

In some pedigrees, you will see dogs with titles - letters before and after a dog's name. These can mean a lot or a little, depending on what the titles are for, and how far back or forward they are in a pedigree. Usually the one you see most often is CH in front of a dog's name. This means the dog attained Champion status in the conformation ring – it has been judged to look like a good example of what its breed should be, according to that breed's standard (the official description of the breed). You may also see other letters before or after the dog's name, these are often working or performance titles. These dogs have been judged in trials to have certain skills, such as hunting, herding, search and rescue, scent tracking, protection, agility, rally or obedience. Verifiable documentation should be provided as to the legitimacy of the organization that awards these titles. For example, I can go online pay online and fill out paperwork saying that I am officially an ordained minister when I am not. I can purchase online a certificate document that says I have a college degree when I do not. Dog Titles can easily be created that are not real or legitimate.

One warning about what titles do not mean: The conformation champion dog (CH) has been judged multiple times in competition. This does not necessarily mean it has a good temperament, in good health or is free from genetic diseases. This is generally true of any title, though working titles sometimes address health and temperament more than conformation titles. This is why research into general breed traits, breeders, lineage and health screenings of any breeding dog are so important!

### **What's a Kennel Club?**

For the most part, most kennel clubs are registries. The terms are often used interchangeably. There are also local dog clubs that are also called kennel clubs, who are **not** registries. These clubs are usually affiliated with one of the registries, and are the groups that put on dog competition shows and trials sometimes only within its breed.

## **So, if all a registry does is record information, why are there so many and what's the difference?**

Some registries are stricter than others as to what dogs they will register, and some promote the welfare of dogs better than others. Some registries seem to be out for a fast buck from ignorant puppy buyers and breeders. They will register dogs for breeders who have been suspended from other registries (usually for record keeping violations or fraud), or will register dogs that other registries won't. Some breeders work with multiple registries, and even charge differently for pups depending on which registry the pup is recorded with. It has been asserted that sometimes these lesser quality registries are sometimes referred to as puppy mills.

At the very least, you should be able to expect that a registered dog is the breed it's supposed to be, and of the parents and ancestors they are supposed to be. Unfortunately, this isn't always true, and the information can be inaccurate or misleading if the breeder is not responsible. For instance, there have been enough problems with inaccurate or falsified pedigrees that the AKC now requires DNA testing on some dogs. United Kennel Club has been promoting DNA testing for several years. But all registries will still usually just take a breeder's word that a pedigree is accurate, and this sometimes leads to inaccurate or fraudulent papers on a dog. Good registries will take action for inaccurate records, such as fines, suspension or permanent expulsion.

Some registries will allow the registration of designer mixed breeds, sometimes called "new rare breeds" for breeding purposes. They are often with poodles mixes as Pekapoos, or Cockapoos, yet the parents of the pups might not have been purebred. Puppy buyers are sometimes fooled into paying a lot of money for what amounts to a "registered" mutt. Being a registered mutt does not make a dog any different from a similar one sitting in a shelter and it certainly does not turn a dog into a purebred. There are many mutts that will make better pets than poorly bred purebreds! Any registration can often cause the price of a dog to skyrocket, when the paper it's printed is useless.

The better kennel clubs have gone beyond their original recording function, and will also provide means to show and compete in trials, promote education, health, and the general welfare of dogs. Some dog registries may not in the best interest of the dogs involved. They often make it much easier for irresponsible breeders to sell their puppies. This leads to thousands of dogs being killed annually in shelters, or suffering from preventable genetic problems or having temperament issues that give quality breeders and respective breeds bad reputations. None are perfect, but some kennel clubs are worse than others. Puppy mills and other irresponsible or ignorant backyard breeders count on registration as a selling point. Irresponsible breeders take full advantage of the public perception that registration means more than it really does. Only the public's education can change this.

### **Buyer Beware!**

We are seeing more dogs from registries other than AKC. Some breeders are unhappy because the AKC has stricter rules, including requiring a DNA profile in stud dogs that produce 7 or more litters in a lifetime. Some of these breeders are breaking away from AKC and now registering their pups (often found for sale in pet shops nationwide) with other, less restrictive, registries. Regardless of where you get your pup, if your pup is registered with anything other than AKC, UKC or German SV, the chances of your pup

being bred by an irresponsible breeder may rise dramatically. It's also up to the potential puppy buyer, to become educated and to avoid being part of the puppy mill/ backyard breeder problem. Do not put your money into the pockets of irresponsible breeders under **any** circumstances. While some of these breeders may sincerely believe they are fulfilling a need for cheaper, affordable dogs to those who otherwise could not afford them; it is too often because they are cheap, that breeders have little humane respect for them and do not vet placements to owners who so easily neglect, abandon and discard them to kill shelters and rescues. Dogs are living beings not simply commodities, and not should not be treated as disposable inanimate objects. Placement in "Forever Homes" should be norm and not the exception.

Do not buy a dog that has not been proven and verified. Ethical Breeders sign a code of ethics, and try to deal with honesty and integrity. They require a contract, and are members of reputable organizations. Be willing to buy a dog that is a little more expensive, but has guarantees. Most ethical reputable breeders are not in it for the money and in fact lose money. They cannot compete with pricing of puppy mills and backyard breeders.

Reputable breeders guarantee their dogs, and are almost always be willing to refund or take back/ replace a dog that has not been altered, damaged or injured. Even when ethical breeders health test their dogs in advance, there is no guarantee that a dog will not inherit a genetic condition that existed many generations ago and unexpectedly reoccurs in spite of the best efforts of breeders. There are numerous possible combinations of mutations, recessive and dominant genes that can appear.

You can do much of your homework on the internet. Any quality purebred dog is going to have parents with a proven publicly accessible record. If a kennel club is not on the internet (those are few), you can usually at least find an address on the internet and write them for information. As a general rule, avoid any owner, kennel club on which you can't get any information at all, or go to a breeder and see at least one of the parents and the environment the puppy has been whelped and raised. Please be aware of what you are and are not really getting when you buy a registered dog.

As you can see, registrations and pedigrees can mean nothing or worse. But if a pup is:

1. backed up by a good pedigree by an accepted registry,
2. has both parents health screened
3. has been tested for temperament issues,
4. has been proven in publicly verifiable competition
5. has a caring, honest, ethical and responsible breeder who takes pride in their lineage and the pups the breeder produces;

then you can also take pride in what your dog's papers represent. Also please remember, regardless of how well-bred a dog is:

***There is NO such thing as a perfect dog.***