



About Dog Registries and Kennel Clubs by Leilah's Mom

Basset Hound puppies, **AKC**, wormed & shots, 5 male. 4 females, adorable (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Reg. Border Collie Pups **CKC** 1 wht male, 2 blk/wht females 9wks old, shots, wormed \$250ea (XXX)XXX-XXXX

Cairn **AKC** Pups Sweet playful healthy XXX-XXX-XXXX

Toy Fox Terrier puppies **UKC** reg (XXX) XXX-XXXX

AKC Golden Retriever Pups. \$300. XXX-XXX-XXXX

These 5 ads, copied here in their entirety, were picked at random from the [Dallas Morning News](#), 4/26/00. I've put the registry abbreviations in bold type: AKC is American Kennel Club, UKC is United Kennel Club or Universal Kennel Club, and CKC can be either the Continental Kennel Club or Canadian Kennel Club. This being advertised in Dallas, I'll guess it's probably Continental Kennel Club. See [below](#) for more info about particular kennel clubs

In Webster's Dictionary, registration means a record is made of something. Few people would think a car good just because it's registered. Most people would shop for a type of vehicle that would suit them, is in safe condition, and sells for good price. Just that the car is registered is NOT usually a main selling point.

So why are these dog registry abbreviations in these dog ads used as a main selling point? Breeders who don't know better, or are just plain irresponsible, often think it's a license to breed their dogs. Puppy buyers often think they're getting something special when they're not, and they can pay a high price for it. There are many unscrupulous or ignorant breeders out there ready to fill their own wallets. Unlike cars where there is usually only one registry per state, there are many registries for dogs, and it can be pretty confusing. AKC is the largest and most well known, but they are not alone out there. Some registries are better than others, as I hope to explain here.

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. These records usually also include a pedigree, and any titles earned by any of the dogs involved. Sometimes it now includes DNA profiles. These records are sometimes collectively known as a dog's "papers".

There are multi-breed registries such as the AKC, and single breed registries such as ASCA (the Australian Shepherd Club of America). Most registries started for one breed, or group of dogs. Over 100 years ago, AKC started for 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 often 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 have formed in order to prove dogs in trials and improve the breed (a better Jack Russell Terrier, or a better Border Collie), and not just to make money selling dogs.

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 breeder's 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 not for profit.

What types of registrations are there?

There are often different types of registrations available with some registries. 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.

A dog with a limited registration is not supposed to breed, and the registry will not register pups from this dog. This means that pups can not be registered if either of their parents have a limited registration. An AKC limited registration can be converted to a full registration if the breeder allows it. Many wonderful dogs are now being sold on limited registrations. This helps protect the quality of family lines, and helps prevent "substandard" 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 the dog or the situation is a good one for his 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 problems and the 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 with their 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 written up. But, this dog would not be purebred, even though he's now got a pedigree. Having a pedigree only means a dog's ancestors are known, not

that the dog is purebred. Some breeders count on people not realizing this, 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 - he has been judged to look like a good example of what his 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 usually working titles. These dogs have been judged in trials to have certain skills, such as hunting, herding, or obedience.

One warning about what titles do not mean: The conformation champion dog (CH) has been judged multiple times on for his looks and motion trotting around a ring only. This does not mean he has a good temperament, or is free from genetic diseases such as hip dysplasia, luxated patellas (bad knees) or heart and thyroid disorders. This is generally true of any title, though working titles do address temperament more than conformation titles, and a dysplastic dog is not very likely to become a agility or lure-coursing champion. This is why research into general breed traits, breeders, and health screenings of any breeding dog are so important!

What's a Kennel Club?

For the most part, Kennel Clubs are registries. The terms are often used interchangeably. There are also local dog clubs 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 shows and trials. One example of this is the [Westminster Kennel Club](#), who is affiliated with the AKC.

So, if all a registry does is record information, why are there so many? 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 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 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. There is no honest reason for this that I can think of. These lesser quality registries are sometimes referred to as paper mills for puppy mills.

At the very least, you should be able to expect that a registered dog is the breed he's supposed to be, and of the parents and ancestors he's 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 or suspension.

Some registries will allow the registration of designer mutts, sometimes called "new rare breeds", for breeding purposes. Puppy buyers are sometimes fooled into paying pay hundreds of dollars for 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 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.

The better kennel clubs have gone beyond their original recording function, and will also provide means to show and trial dogs, promote education, health, and the general welfare of dogs. I strongly feel that some dog registries are 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. None are saints, but some kennel clubs are worse than others. Puppy millers and other irresponsible or ignorant breeders count on registration as a selling point. Even the AKC makes millions from registering these puppies. (My own dogs are registered with AMBOR, United Kennel Club, and AKC, all are limited registrations for trialing purposes only, not for breeding). 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!

Soon, you may start seeing more dogs from registries other than AKC in pet stores. I know the Missouri and Oklahoma commercial dog breeder's association members are unhappy now that AKC's got stricter rules, and is requiring a DNA profile in stud dogs that produce 7 or more litters in a lifetime. Many 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 or 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/ backyard breeder problem. Do not put your money into the pockets of irresponsible breeders under **any** circumstances. The only thing they'll feel is getting hit in the wallet.

You can do much of your homework on the internet. 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. Avoid any kennel club on which you can't get any information at all.

Please be aware of what you are really getting when you buy a registered dog. As

you can see, registration often means nothing or worse. But if a pup is backed up by a good pedigree, health screened parents, and a caring, honest, and responsible breeder who takes pride in the pups he produces, then you can also take pride in what your dog's papers represent!

Some of the things I look for when looking at a registry/kennel club 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 various limited registrations.
- That every breed have a standard, a "parent" breed club who sets that standard, and that the club consists of more than a couple of breeders
- Encouragement of spay and neuter for mix breeds and purebreds who do not meet their breed or working standards
- That breeders be encouraged to prove their dogs meets their standards in the conformation or trial ring
- That the kennel club has or sponsors shows and trials where the dog's qualities can be proven, for all breeds.
- That breeders are encouraged to carefully plan breedings, sell pups to only 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/registry sites that have:

- Recognizing mixed breeds (such as Cockapoo) for breeding purposes
- Been founded around a single new breed that someone has recently "created", often not even set in breed type or has vague standards - that can mean the breed isn't "breeding true".
- No competitions to prove the dogs' qualities (or links to competition pages that go nowhere and the site is not very new).
- No suggestion or education about OFA type health testing/screening, and none or very few of the breeders seem to know what it is.
- No limited registrations available.
- Advertising sections for breeders, and most ads don't mention health clearances beyond a vet check if at all.
- Listing private breeders as "breed clubs", or breed clubs are composed of a very small group of just a few breeders.
- Breed standards missing or have very, very broad descriptions - can

cover up the fact that the dogs are really mutts. Multiple breed standards recognized by single registry, for a single breed, can cover up lots of problems too.

- Clubs that have same or similar initials to more reputable clubs (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....
- Supported mainly by a pet store, pet store chain, or other special interest groups who's interest may not be the welfare of dogs, but the welfare of their wallets.
- Clubs and registries who have emphasis on what the registration certificate looks like ("*includes a gold seal for only \$5 more*")

Further reading:

* notes links not working at last update

[More Kennel Club links](#)

[Dog Registries](#)

[Registries](#)

[What does AKC Registration Really Mean?](#)

[Article on World Kennel Club *](#)

[Defining and Finding a Responsible Breeder, and more....](#)

[A Guide to Classified Ads](#)

[Time Magazine: A Terrible Beauty](#)

[Much Ado About Poo](#)

[AKC DNA Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Choosing a Dog](#)

[AKC Titles and Abbreviations](#)

[Orthopedic Foundation for Animals \(OFA\)](#)

- an example of genetic health screen certifications that responsible breeders use

[Toy Munchkins, Uncovered](#)

- a example of a "new rare breed" that really isn't, there's lots of "breeds" like this out there.

[International Kennel Club](#)

- a typical pet store with typical pet store pups, not to be confused with IKC of Chicago, an AKC affiliate. Many celebrity clients, and promoted by Rosie O'Donnell on her national TV show. For more info on pet shop pups, [click here](#). If you want to tell Rosie what you think, [click here](#).

[The Complete Vizagle](#)

- satire about the "new rare breeds", this is actually Leilah the Wonderpuppy, and she's a mutt.

[The CKCi](#)

- satire about the paper mills

Common Multi-breed Kennel Clubs:

(All comments are the personal opinions of this author)

[AKC - American Kennel Club](#) - the granddaddy of them all in the U.S. Offers the most breeder/owner information of any kennel club, and has the furthest reach with the general public. Lots of good information on this site, though I wish they could come down harder on irresponsible breeders. Their recent DNA requirements are a big step in the right direction.

[UKC - United Kennel Club](#) - pioneer in DNA testing to verify pedigrees. Has a club wide code of ethics, printed on every registration form, that helps discourage retail sale of pups, as well as other pro-dog rules and guidelines. In my opinion, this is the #1 kennel club/registry for operating in the best interest of dogs (but I might be biased, they are also the first registry I had a dog registered with).

[UKC - Universal Kennel Club](#) - emphasis on classifieds and rat terriers, lots of self advertising. Promotes a regular vet exam as if this were the same as genetic health screens (it's NOT). Because of lawsuits with the other UKC, they are now trying to use the initials UKI for Universal Kennel Club International. Gotta wonder about a registry that has a "Doggie Love Connection" section for shopping for stud services.

[CKC - Canadian Kennel Club](#) - Canadian AKC equivalent.

[CKC - Continental Kennel Club](#) - an "open" registry. Will register mixed breeds for the purpose of breeding them. Will recognize more than one standard per breed. Lots of self advertising and breeder advertising.

[WKC - World Kennel Club](#) - Classifieds message board here is infamous in some internet dog circles. Run by a single person. No listing of recognized breeds.

[FCI - Federation Cynologique Internationale](#) - the kennel club for the rest of the world - not a dog registry, but an organization that keeps breed standards and related records for national kennel clubs in other countries.

[FIC - Federation of International Canines](#) - Most ads have no health screens mentioned. Half the pages are selling something, no real useful info for breeders and owners.

[ARBA - American Rare Breeds Association](#) - recognizes rare breeds (usually foreign breeds) that are recognized by FCI, but not usually recognized by AKC. Also rare American breeds that have standards and parent clubs as approved by their board of directors. They are the main source of competitions for these dogs.



Copyright©2000 Leilah's Mom who's no breeder and never paid one red cent to buy a dog, but just hangs out on the 'net a lot and learns what she can.

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