ABS
Q&As

YOUR GUIDE TO THE KENNEL CLUB ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME

For more information visit www.assuredbreederscheme.org.uk
HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE ABS?

There are a number of questions or misconceptions breeders may have about the Assured Breeder Scheme. Here are some answers to help you better understand the standards of the Scheme, expectations for membership and how it helps to provide puppy buyers with assurance that they are choosing a responsible breeder.

1. WHAT ARE THE REWARDS AND BENEFITS OF BEING A MEMBER OF THE ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME?

Assured Breeders are rewarded for their commitment to breeding for health and welfare.

Apart from being listed on the Kennel Club website all year round, Assured Breeders benefit from free listings of their litters on the Kennel Club’s Find a Puppy service (each listing costs £25 for non-members). Assured Breeders also receive a discounted registration fee of £2 per puppy.

Further benefits include discounts on health screening and testing (Animal Health Trust 30%, Optigen 20%, CVS Vet Group 20% and Laboklin 10%) as well as on items such as whelping boxes, fleece bedding and grooming products. We are constantly looking for further benefits and rewards for our members and would welcome your feedback. Please email abs@thekennelclub.org.uk.

The long term aim of the Scheme is to improve health and welfare in dog breeding as a whole. We direct the puppy buying public to breeders who offer them the best chance of getting a healthy, socialised puppy from someone who is experienced in the breed and ready to offer help and advice. While we recognise that there are many breeders outside of the Scheme doing an excellent job, by encouraging more people onto the Scheme we hope to leave disreputable, purely financially-motivated breeders more exposed.
CAN PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER BRED PUPPIES JOIN THE SCHEME?

In the early days of the Scheme, it was possible to become a member without having bred a litter, but this has not been the case for some time. We now require breeders to have bred at least one litter prior to acceptance. If an applicant has not previously bred a litter, they can still receive a Breeder Assessment Visit so that as soon as the applicant applies to register a litter that meets all the requirements of the Scheme, their membership can be activated and they can receive all the benefits.

The Scheme is open to any breeder providing they subscribe to, and abide by, good breeding practice and fulfil the health testing requirements. Inexperienced breeders are welcomed so that they can be guided and supported in order to adopt good practice from the very start.

IS THE SCHEME ONLY FOR THOSE WHO BREED A LOT OF DOGS?

No - the average member breeds just one litter every 2½ years and the vast majority of breeders who belong to the Scheme keep their dogs in their home as part of the family. The Scheme has a Standard against which compliance is assessed and both high and low volume breeders can join providing they abide by good breeding practice, fulfill the health testing requirements and provide lifetime support to their puppy buyers. We have now introduced a non-breeding discount whereby members will only pay £45.00 at the time of their membership renewal if they have not bred a litter in the previous 12 months.
DO BREEDERS NEED SPECIALISED FACILITIES TO JOIN THE SCHEME?

No, as long as the required standard is being met, there should be no issue. Facilities must be appropriate to the number of dogs kept, but you do not need to have kennels or separate areas to house your dogs. Many of our Assured Breeders only have one or two dogs who live in their home alongside them. We additionally do not dictate that your bitch must whelp in specialist facilities, but do require that you make reasonable provisions to ensure that the welfare of the bitch is a major priority.

SHOULD MEMBERS OF THE ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME BE USING HEALTH TEST RESULTS WHEN MAKING THEIR BREEDING DECISIONS?

Absolutely. We expect breeders to make informed decisions based upon the relevant health test results conducted in advance of a mating. Those who choose to breed despite the result indicating that it is ill advised, will be removed from the Scheme unless very good reasons can be provided.

Where a DNA test is a requirement in a breed, at least one parent must have tested clear for the relevant condition. For screening tests such as hip and elbow grading where a result is not a simple pass or fail, breeders are expected to consider BVA guidelines alongside other information such as inbreeding coefficients, temperament and other characteristics, in order to select breeding stock which will produce the healthiest puppies.
CAN A BREEDER BE ‘ASSURED’ IF THEY HAVE NOT BEEN INSPECTED?

No, every new applicant to the Scheme needs to be inspected before they are allowed to join. Only certified Assured Breeder Scheme members are listed on the Find an Assured Breeder section on the KC website and are clearly indicated on our Find A Puppy listing when they have a litter. All certified members have received a successful inspection within the last three years as indicated by the green tick beside their name on our website.

All other members, including Supporters not currently breeding from their dogs, are eligible to receive ABS discounts but must undergo a successful Assessment Visit before they can rejoin as a full, certified member.

DO MEMBERS HAVE TO COMPLETE A LOT OF PAPERWORK?

One of the reasons behind the creation of the Assured Breeder Scheme was that puppy buyers felt they had not received the help and advice they needed from their breeders and felt unprepared to care for their new puppy. Our Assured Breeders have a wealth of knowledge which is invaluable to first-time owners or those new to a particular breed. We require our members to share this knowledge by preparing written information to provide to their new owners. This information covers a number of subjects but is not extensive. It includes diet advice, grooming tips and a guide to training and socialisation. The Assured Breeder Team is always on hand to help with this task, and has provided templates which can be downloaded from the website and make the putting together of a Puppy Information Pack a relatively easy exercise. Breeders have told us that it takes just a few minutes to produce a comprehensive Puppy Information Pack that meets all the Scheme requirements. Once made, it can be saved and printed out for each new puppy owner.

Admittedly, there is a small amount of red tape which must be adhered to in order to meet the requirements of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). We ensure this is kept to an absolute minimum and is clearly defined in the Scheme’s requirements, as it is in nobody’s interest to have a Scheme where the members are unsure about what is expected of them.
DO THE PEOPLE RUNNING AND POLICING THE SCHEME KNOW MUCH ABOUT DOGS?

The Health and Breeder Services Department oversees the day to day running of the ABS and among them are three championship show breeders/judges, a canine welfare professional and experienced dog owners who compete in a wide range of Kennel Club activities. The visit assessment staff also possess a wealth of canine experience in fields as diverse as training and behaviourist work, veterinary nursing and boarding kennel management. A number of the assessors are also breeders themselves. Most importantly, they understand dogs and dog breeders.

HOW IS THE SCHEME POLICED?

The Scheme carries out rigorous policing in order to retain its UKAS accreditation. Inspections are carried out by highly trained assessors and each litter application is checked for non-compliance. All issues or concerns raised are promptly investigated.

Breeders undergo an assessment visit upon joining the Scheme and at least every three years thereafter. Additional checks are carried out if issues or concerns are raised. Our Assessors are fully trained and subject to regular competency assessments to safeguard consistency of visits. Each litter is checked for compliance to breed-specific Scheme rules before acceptance and puppy buyers are encouraged to submit feedback forms which are thoroughly checked by Scheme staff. Exceptions to the litter registration rules are rare, but will be considered when a compelling reason has been provided in writing, on the basis that the puppy buyer is informed at the time of sale.

The Assured Breeder Scheme removes breeders who fail to maintain the Scheme standard or who do not uphold the spirit of the Scheme.
HOW DOES THE SCHEME ENSURE PUPPY FARMERS CANNOT JOIN?

Every single applicant to join the Scheme receives a visit from a trained Assessor to ensure they comply with the Scheme’s high welfare standards before their membership is accepted and they can register their puppies.

The interpretation of what constitutes a puppy farmer can differ greatly, but we all agree that the defining characteristic is somebody who has little regard or consideration for the basic needs and care of the dogs concerned; in simple terms, those who put profit above welfare. Since 2014, all Assured Breeders have been required to complete a successful visit prior to registering their puppies and must be revisited at least once every 3 years. We will visit more frequently if we have concerns about a particular breeder and their ability to maintain the Scheme standard. Only breeders who prioritise the health and welfare of their dogs and puppies will be allowed to remain on the Scheme. Anyone who has concerns about an individual member who they feel is in breach of Scheme rules can email details to abs@thekennelclub.org.uk.

DOES THE ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME MAKE MONEY FOR THE KENNEL CLUB?

No, the Assured Breeder Scheme exists to improve the health and welfare of dogs; it is not a way for the Kennel Club to make money. Membership fees go back into the administration costs of running the Scheme and the Breeder Assessment Visits alone mean that the Scheme actually costs the Kennel Club money to run. In spite of this, we consider it an extremely worthwhile programme and therefore the Kennel Club is committed to continue investing in the Scheme to develop it further.
ARE MEMBERS OF THE ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE BREEDERS IN THE COUNTRY?

The Kennel Club recognises that there are responsible breeders outside of the Assured Breeder Scheme but it can be difficult for puppy buyers to identify who these breeders are. The Scheme enables the Kennel Club to direct puppy buyers to a list of responsible breeders who they can vouch for. Without the Scheme, puppy buyers have little way of knowing which breeders are adopting best practice. We hope that by encouraging more breeders onto the Scheme, we make puppy buyers more confident in their choices and leave disreputable breeders more exposed.