Introduction

Welcome to the incredibly rewarding journey of responsibly breeding from your dog. As any good breeder will tell you, breeding from your dog or bitch may have its challenges, but there are also huge benefits! Bringing new life into the world is an amazing experience and if carried out in an informed and considerate way, will lead to healthy, happy puppies that go on to live long, rewarding lives.

This guide is intended to help you on this journey and will provide you with information on how to breed responsibly. The guide is made up of three sections, breeding from your bitch, using your dog at stud and health information and responsible breeding. It is highly advisable to read through the whole information guide, whether you own a bitch, stud dog, or both.
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1. Breeding from your bitch

**Things to consider**

If you are thinking of breeding from your bitch, there are certain questions that you will need to ask yourself before proceeding:

- Is the bitch fit, healthy and does she have a good temperament?
- Can I afford to pay for the recommended health tests for the bitch prior to mating her and, where necessary, for her litter?
- Do I know enough to help the bitch during the whelping, if necessary?
- Can I afford to pay for a caesarean should the dam have difficulty whelping the litter?
- Could I cope with a very large litter of, say, 10 or 12 puppies?
- Do I have sufficient knowledge to rear the litter correctly, including worming, vaccinations and socialisation?
- Have I the time to devote to a litter until the puppies are old enough to go to their new homes, which is usually around eight weeks?
- Am I knowledgeable enough to advise new owners about caring for their puppies, including rearing, diet, training and health problems?
- Would I be able to find good homes for the puppies?
- Am I in a position to take back or re-home any puppies if it becomes necessary?

If you have not been able to say yes to these questions, then breeding may not be for you. If you decide not to breed from your bitch, then you may wish to consider having her spayed to prevent unwanted or unplanned pregnancies.
If you have been able to say yes to most of these questions, do not forget that you will also need to keep the following in mind:

- Responsible breeders believe that each new litter they breed should be an improvement on the parents and the breed.
- Responsible breeders give careful consideration to health issues, temperament and the look of the dog.
- Responsible breeders plan ahead of each mating to ensure that each puppy produced will be bred in the best possible environment.
- Responsible breeders accept responsibility for a puppy which they have bred, and make themselves available to give advice, help and information to new owners.

Still interested in breeding? Then read on!

The Kennel Club does not keep specific information relating to breeding, as this can vary tremendously from breed to breed. Your breed club or the breeder of your bitch may be able to provide you with further expert advice. There are a number of general books on breeding currently available. Additionally, you will find that there are many breed specific books that contain chapters that relate to breeding.

For more information on breeding and puppy socialisation you may also wish to visit the breeding section of the Kennel Club website www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding

Becoming a member of a breed club will enable you to learn more about your breed and allow you to contact other owners and breeders for advice.

Telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and website details for breed clubs can be obtained via the Breed Information Centre on the Kennel Club website www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk.
Breeding from your bitch

The Kennel Club rules for registration

Before thinking about breeding from your bitch, you should acquaint yourself with the Kennel Club Rules and Regulations on registering litters and the registration system in general. You will need to remember that the Kennel Club will not accept an application to register a litter when:

1. The dam has already whelped four litters, save in exceptional circumstances, and only provided the application is made prior to the mating and with veterinary evidence as to the suitability of the bitch involved in the proposed whelping and permission has been received, or

2. The dam has already reached the age of 8 years at the date of whelping, save in exceptional circumstances, and only provided application is made prior to the mating, and the proposed dam has previously whelped at least one other registered litter and permission has been received. Any such application must be supported by veterinary evidence as to the suitability of the bitch involved in the proposed whelping, or

3. The dam was under one year old at the time of mating, or

4. The offspring are the result of any mating between father and daughter, mother and son or brother and sister, save in exceptional circumstances or for scientifically proven welfare reasons and permission has been received, or

5. The dam has already had two litters delivered by caesarean section, save for scientifically proven welfare reasons, and this only provided the application is made prior to the mating.

Provided that the General Committee reserves the right to refuse any application made under Regulation B22c (1), (2), (4) and (5).
It is important that you ensure that your bitch is registered in your own name and that the stud dog is also Kennel Club registered and that the owner’s details are correct.

You will also need to ensure that your bitch’s Kennel Club registration does not carry any breeding restrictions (otherwise known as endorsements). If there are any, you will need to discuss this further with the person from whom you obtained the bitch. Any breeding restrictions will need to be removed before registration of a litter can take place. In most cases it will be your bitch’s breeder who placed the restriction, and they will therefore be the person empowered to remove it.

For more information on how to register your dog with the Kennel Club, please visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/registration

**Breeding and the law**

Under the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999, those breeders breeding five or more litters per year may need to be licensed. However, a local authority may still classify a breeder as being commercial – and therefore requiring a licence – even if the person breeds fewer than five litters per year, if in the local authority’s opinion, that person might be deemed as breeding for commercial gain.

If breeders are in any doubt as to their eligibility under the Act, the Kennel Club advises that they contact their local Environmental Health Office for further clarification. If you need to be licensed, the Kennel Club advises that you obtain a copy of the Act so that you are fully aware of its contents and your responsibilities.
Breeding from your bitch

When to breed from your bitch

The bitch should be over a year old, and preferably had one normal season prior to mating. It is also important to have your bitch examined for any inherited diseases to which the breed is subject, prior to mating. You can find information about health tests to consider at the Kennel Club’s Breed Information Centre. The average day on which to mate a bitch is between the 11-14th day of her season. However, judging the correct day to mate your bitch can sometimes be difficult as some can be ready to be mated earlier and some bitches will not accept a dog until much later. It may therefore be prudent to have an ovulation test carried out by your veterinary surgeon to determine the correct date on which to mate your bitch, especially if the stud dog lives a fair distance away.

Bitches are in whelp for approximately 63 days, although this can vary depending on litter size.

Finding a suitable stud dog

The Kennel Club does not currently keep a register of stud dogs. Therefore, you should contact either your dog’s breeder or a breed club to ensure that you find a suitable mate for your bitch. As a responsible breeder, you will need to ensure that any stud dog that you decide to use not only has a compatible pedigree, but has also been examined for any inherited disease to which the breed is subject. To find the health test results of the dog you are considering and the inbreeding coefficient of the puppies produced from a hypothetical mating, please refer to Mate Select on The Kennel Club website.

For further information, visit www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk

For further information, visit www.mateselect.org.uk
Remember that male dogs may also carry breeding restrictions, and therefore you will need to bear in mind that any breeding endorsements will have to be removed from his registration records before the litter can be registered. You are strongly advised to confirm, prior to the mating, that any such endorsement has been removed.

Details of approximate stud fees, puppy prices and more information on your chosen breed may be obtained from the breeder of your dog, or from the breed clubs.

**Legal contracts**

The Kennel Club would advise that if you are using another owner’s stud dog, or when it comes to selling your puppies, you ensure that anything agreed between the parties is recorded in a written contract. This way, there can be no misunderstandings between either party should the worst occur. This is especially important if you are selling any puppies that you have endorsed with the Kennel Club, and in fact forms part of the KC Regulation when applying to place endorsements.

A general guide to creating a puppy contract may be found under the Advice Sheet Template section of the Assured Breeder pages of the Kennel Club website.

For more information and to join online visit www.assuredbreeders.org.uk or call 01296 318540
Breeding from your bitch

Finding good homes for your puppies

It is vitally important that you find the right home for your puppies. Hopefully this will determine where they will spend the rest of their life, and you will want to ensure that the puppy will be happy in that environment.

As a guideline, you may wish to think about some of the following when making your decision:

• Find out if the people who want to buy the puppy have done their “homework” on their chosen breed.
• Try to meet the whole family, including any children, if possible.
• Ask potential owners if they already have any other dogs / pets.
• Find out whether the dog is wanted purely as a pet, or whether they may be interested in breeding at a later stage. You may have placed endorsements on the puppy’s registration certificate and these will need to be explained to the new owner before or at the date of sale.
• Advertise on the Kennel Club’s “Find a Puppy Service”.
• When you register your litter you have the option to advertise your litter on the Kennel Club website. The online Find a Puppy Service has on average over 350,000 searches every month. However if you are an Assured Breeder your litter will be advertised for free.

For more information on the Find a Puppy Service visit www.findapuppy.org.uk or call 01296 318540

• Do not mislead people regarding the dog’s characteristics and the care it requires (particularly of the coat). Incomplete information for the new owner may result in the puppy being returned to you, or being sold on.
• Find out how much time they spend at home. It is not necessarily a bad thing if they are out all day, provided they can take the dog to work with them.

• Find out more about where they live, for example do they have a fenced garden? Some breeders like to conduct a home check before selling a puppy (you could always ask for photographs if it is not possible for you to visit the house in person). Do not automatically rule out flat dwellers – as long as they are willing and able to walk the dog regularly they may be able to offer a suitable home. It may even be the case that the dog is better off as it cannot just be put out in the garden for exercise!

• Finally, if you are not sure that the home is right for the puppy, then do not sell it.

**Insuring your puppies prior to sale**

Make sure you set up the Kennel Club 4 weeks FREE insurance cover for each puppy to help give them the best start in life.

For more information, call free **0800 369 90 90**
or visit [www.kcinsurance.co.uk](http://www.kcinsurance.co.uk)
2. Thinking of using your dog at stud?

The Kennel Club does not currently keep a register of stud dogs and therefore if you wish to use your dog at stud you may want to contact your local breed club for more information and advice.

**Kennel Club registration**

In order to register your dog’s progeny with the Kennel Club, you will need to ensure that the dog is in your registered ownership. You will also need to ensure that your dog’s Kennel Club registration does not carry any breeding restrictions or endorsements. If there are any, you will need to discuss this further with the person from whom you obtained the dog, as any breeding restrictions or endorsements will need to be removed before the registration of a litter can take place. In most cases it will be the breeder who has placed the restriction, and they will therefore be the person empowered to remove it.

**Stud dog contract and fees**

The terms and conditions of a mating do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Kennel Club. It is therefore advisable that any breeding terms or stud fees should be arranged by mutual agreement in writing between the owner of the dog and the owner of the bitch before the mating takes place.

**The Kennel Club Academy**

If you are a breeder or are interested in dog breeding education, visit the Breeding Education section of the Kennel Club Academy. This area provides a range of films covering topics from pre-breeding considerations right through to rearing, owning and caring for the health and welfare of adult dogs.
A general guide to creating a stud book contract may be found under the Advice Sheet Template section of the Assured Breeder pages of the Kennel Club website.

As a general point, if a dog has not previously been used at stud, the owner might charge a nominal fee covering expenses etc.

Once the dog has been proven (i.e. has produced puppies), the stud fee may be reviewed for any future matings according to the value of the dog as a proven sire, and the quality of his progeny. A guide to an appropriate stud fee may be obtained by contacting your dog breeder or nearest breed club, who may be able to give you advice on this and any other matters relating to your breed.

If you are considering buying an adult dog for use at stud that has not yet produced progeny, it is advisable to have the dog’s fertility tested by an appropriate specialist, to ensure the dog is fertile before purchase.
3. Health Information and responsible breeding

Breeding for health

Before breeding from your bitch or dog, the Kennel Club advises that you check whether there are any possible inherited conditions that may affect your breed. There are many inherited conditions where tests are available (e.g. hip dysplasia, eye conditions or an inherited condition with an available DNA test). Information on these can be found on the Breed Information Centre of the Kennel Club website, or by contacting your veterinary surgeon, breed club, and/or your dog’s breeder.

For further information, visit www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk

There are several health schemes currently in operation to assist in the prevention or control of some diseases (including DNA tests), and where they exist, the Kennel Club strongly recommends that both sire and dam are tested. Results for these tests for individual dogs are available from the Kennel Club’s online health resource Mate Select.

For further information, visit www.mateselect.org.uk

Mate Select is a range of free online health related resource that can give breeders an idea of the inherited health of potential parents. By using Mate Select, a breeder can easily and accurately integrate health screening and genetic diversity information into their breeding plans. The resources that are available via Mate Select are:

- **The Health Test Results Finder**
  
  This resource allows you to search for any health test results for a dog which is registered on the Kennel Club’s Breed Register, either by its registered name or registration number (or stud book number). It will display any health screening test results received and recorded by the Kennel Club from a British Veterinary Association /Kennel Club (BVA/KC) health scheme
(Hip scheme, elbow scheme, eye scheme and syringomyelia/chiari like malformation scheme) or results from official Kennel Club DNA testing schemes.

- **The Inbreeding Coefficient Calculators**
  This facility enables breeders and puppy finders to calculate the degree of inbreeding (or inbreeding coefficient) for an individual breed, an individual dog, or for potential puppies produced from a hypothetical mating. It is important to note that the Kennel Club will not register the offspring which are the result of any mating between father and daughter, mother and son or brother and sister, save in exceptional circumstances or for scientifically proven welfare reasons.

- **Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs)**
  This produces a measure of an individual’s genetic risk for specific complex conditions, such as hip and elbow dysplasia. EBVs are used to calculate the genetic risk of the individual by utilising the dog’s BVA/KC score and those of its relatives. EBVs are initially available for 15 breeds.

For further advice and information on canine health, visit [www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health) or view our information guide *Breeding for health* available via the Kennel Club website.
Health Information and responsible breeding

**The Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme**

This Scheme promotes good breeding practice and, as a breeder, you should consider joining. There are a number of basic principles that Assured Breeders must agree to follow, which encourage the breeding of healthy, well-adjusted puppies.

The Kennel Club is the only organisation accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to certify dog breeders under the Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme. This gives the puppy buying public additional confidence that Kennel Club Assured Breeders are committed to meeting and maintaining high standards for caring for the health and welfare of their puppies and breeding bitches, and are the best point of contact for buying healthy, happy puppies.

Although the main responsibilities of this scheme relate to the dam owner, there are responsibilities such as health testing and permanent identification required for the stud dog.

Details of the current Scheme requirements can be obtained from the Kennel Club’s Health and Breeder Services Department or from the Kennel Club website.

For more information and to join online visit [www.assuredbreeders.org.uk](http://www.assuredbreeders.org.uk) or call 01296 318540
The Kennel Club Breed Watch
Providing anyone involved in the world of dogs with the latest information on visible health conditions and exaggerated conformational issues that are detrimental to the health and welfare of each breed.

Thinking about breeding from your dog? Improve your knowledge first with the Kennel Club Academy

The Kennel Club Academy offers a series of resources including films, covering topics such as understanding inheritance, inbreeding, pre-breeding considerations, health testing and how to maximise the chances of producing healthy offspring.

The Kennel Club Academy highlights the health information available to modern dog breeders and emphasises how this knowledge can be used effectively.

Sign up to the Kennel Club Academy for free at www.kcacademy.org.uk
The Kennel Club General Code of Ethics

All breeders who register their puppies, and new owners who register ownership of their dogs with the Kennel Club, accept the jurisdiction of the Kennel Club and take to abide by its general Code of Ethics.

**Breeders/Owners:**

1. Will properly house, feed, water and exercise all dogs under their care and arrange for appropriate veterinary attention if and when required.

2. Will agree without reservation that any veterinary surgeon who performs an operation on any of their dogs which alters the natural conformation of the animal, or who carries out a caesarean section on a bitch, may report such operations to the Kennel Club.

3. Will agree that no healthy puppy will be culled. Puppies which may not conform to the Breed Standard should be placed in suitable homes.


5. Will not create demand for, nor supply, puppies that have been docked illegally.

6. Will agree not to breed from a dog or bitch which could be in any way harmful to the dog or to the breed.

7. Will not allow any of their dogs to roam at large or to cause a nuisance to neighbours or those carrying out official duties.

8. Will ensure that their dogs wear properly tagged collars and will be kept leashed or under effective control when away from home.

9. Will clean up after their dogs in public places or anywhere their dogs are being exhibited.

10. Will only sell dogs where there is a reasonable expectation of a happy and healthy life and will help with the re-homing of a dog if the initial circumstances change.

11. Will supply written details of all dietary requirements and give guidance concerning responsible ownership when placing dogs in a new home.

12. Will ensure that all relevant Kennel Club documents are provided to the new owner when selling or transferring a dog, and will agree, in writing, to forward any relevant documents at the earliest opportunity, if not immediately available.

13. Will not sell any dog to commercial dog wholesalers, retail pet dealers or directly or indirectly allow dogs to be given as a prize or donation in a competition of any kind. Will not sell by sale or auction Kennel Club registration certificates as standalone items (not accompanying a dog).

14. Will not knowingly misrepresent the characteristics of the breed nor falsely advertise dogs nor mislead any person regarding the health or quality of a dog.

Breach of these provisions may result in expulsion from club membership, and/or disciplinary action by the Kennel Club and/or reporting to the relevant authorities for legal action, as appropriate.
Breeding a litter of puppies can be very rewarding, but you need to remember that it can also be a costly and time consuming experience. The Kennel Club is committed to supporting responsible breeders to help ensure that all dogs – now and in the future – are fit, healthy and cared for.
The Kennel Club works to protect and promote the health and welfare of all dogs in the UK. We want happy, healthy dogs living long lives with responsible owners. All profits from the organisation go straight into funding the many programmes run in the best interest of dogs and dog owners and to support the Kennel Club Charitable Trust to re-invest into a wide variety of welfare and health programmes.

Anyone can register their dog with the Kennel Club. By registering you will demonstrate your commitment to your dog’s well-being and to the health and welfare of all dogs. You can register online today at www.thekennelclub.org.uk/dogregistration.

Whatever your dog’s needs, the Kennel Club is here to help and support you. Find out more by contacting us on 01296 318540, or visit our website at www.thekennelclub.org.uk to find out more about the wonderful world of dogs.

Additional guides on a wide range of subjects are also available to download from our website at www.thekennelclub.org.uk:

- Breeding for health
- Choosing and bringing home the right dog for you
- Common canine poisons in the house and garden
- Do you know dog law?
- Do you know how to look after your dog in its senior years?
- How to get involved in fun activities and competitions with your dog
- How to get started with dog training
- How to register your dog with the Kennel Club
- Introducing dogs to children or babies
- Kennel Club endorsements
- Managing your dog’s weight
- Moving house with your dog
- Pet Insurance Guide for dog owners
- Puppy Socialisation
- Road travel with your dog
- So you are thinking of working with dogs?
- Thinking of showing your dog in the UK?
- Travelling abroad with your dog
- Why should I Microchip my pet?