

### 3.3 The Accredited Breeder Scheme (ABS)

**3.3.1** The Accredited Breeder Scheme (ABS) was set up in 2004<sup>79</sup> to enable potential dog owners to 'buy with confidence' from KC approved breeders. A KC accredited breeder is assumed to be experienced, have a proven track record for producing healthy dogs of good temperament and to have performed all health tests relevant to their breed of choice<sup>80</sup>.

**3.3.2** The KC launched the ABS as, under their rules, they cannot refuse general registrations and this scheme was a way of focusing more on health and welfare<sup>81</sup>. The scheme is voluntary - anyone can join as long as they pay the fee and it very much depends on the goodwill of dog breeders – it is seen as a way of influencing them to follow the most responsible breeding practices.<sup>82</sup>

**3.3.3** Puppy buyers are encouraged to look for accredited breeders when they acquire a dog. The KC provides information on their website about things to consider when purchasing a dog and the ABS. This receives 12,000 hits per day.<sup>83</sup> This reveals the large number of people who do seek information through the KC and who would potentially then look for a breeder who is ABS registered if they are directed towards them.

**3.3.4** Accredited breeders are recommended to use mandatory health screening schemes relevant to their breed including DNA testing, testing for hip or elbow dysplasia and inherited eye conditions<sup>84</sup>. Permanent identification of breeding stock is required for membership of the scheme<sup>85</sup>. The breeders' sign up to allow potential inspections of the property where the dogs are kept and also ensure the puppies they sell are well-socialised and generally follow good breeding practice<sup>86</sup>.

**3.3.5** The scheme is self governing, with the KC carrying out home inspections only on the advice of breed club members who consider a scheme member to be inappropriate for membership or if feedback from a purchaser highlights a problem<sup>87</sup>. According to the KC<sup>88</sup>, the scheme is not in place to highlight the elite dog breeders, but to set guidelines for breeders to adhere to in order for them to function as good breeders under KC definitions. The KC is keen for as many breeders as possible to join the scheme.

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<sup>79</sup> Written evidence submitted by The Kennel Club Jan 09

<sup>80</sup> The Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme (information for pedigree puppy buyers) webpage

<sup>81</sup> Written evidence submitted by The Kennel Club Jan 09

<sup>82</sup> *ibid*

<sup>83</sup> Written evidence submitted by the Kennel Club Jan 09

<sup>84</sup> The Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme (information for pedigree puppy buyers) webpage <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/buying/>

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*

<sup>86</sup> The Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme (information for pedigree puppy buyers) webpage <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/buying/>

<sup>87</sup> The Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme – How the Scheme will be Policed. <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/421>

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*

**3.3.6** However, there is a lack of clarity over the different levels of breeding standards the KC seem to offer from their general registration to the ABS. Joining the ABS is a breeder's choice to seek to achieve what is seen as a higher standard above the general registrations. It is argued by some that the KC should require all their registered breeders to reach the ABS standards rather than having different levels within their organisation<sup>89</sup>. Even if such a scheme lacked teeth it would show that the KC are attempting to encourage all of their breeders to give some consideration to health and welfare, albeit in a limited form.

**3.3.7** The Dogs Trust does not believe the ABS to be sufficient as the standards are too low and too vague and there is not an adequate way of ensuring inspection and enforcement<sup>90</sup>. There have been other suggestions that the ABS is sound in principal and could be the starting point for the content of a code of practice which would have an impact on all breeders but that code should be substantially more robust.<sup>91</sup>

**3.3.8** The Inquiry believes the use of the word 'pedigree' should be tied to a high standard of breeding (for health and welfare) across the board with the KC not just with the few that decide to join the ABS. If breeders are unable to adhere to a requested high standard for the welfare of their dogs then they should not be part of an organisation which states that they are 'the UK's largest organisation dedicated to the health and welfare of dogs<sup>92</sup>.'

**3.3.9** The KC should do random checks on breeders registering dogs and should enforce such schemes much more robustly. The Inquiry has heard that low standards of breeding practice have been discovered by some breeders registered under the ABS<sup>93</sup>. This suggests the public may be falsely led into thinking a puppy they buy from an accredited breeder registered with the KC will have no health or welfare problems associated with its breeding history.

## 3.4 Dog breeders

**3.4.1** Dog breeders fit into three main groups with the most common one being the occasional breeder who breeds one litter and sells locally without too much attention given to profit. The second group is those who breed to improve stock for showing and often they keep the puppies or sell them onto others who are interested in

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<sup>89</sup> Written evidence submitted from Carol Fowler, campaigner 10th Jan 09, Jemima Harrison, Producer of 'Pedigree Dogs Exposed' during oral evidence session 29th April 09

<sup>90</sup> Written evidence submitted by Mr Chris Laurence, Veterinary Director, The Dog's Trust Jan 09, Written evidence submitted by Ryan O'Meara, Chief Executive of C-fidos and managing director of K9 Media Ltd, 28th Jan 09

<sup>91</sup> Written evidence submitted by Margaret Carter, campaigner and ex breed club member Jan 09, Written evidence submitted by the National Animal Welfare Trust 30th Jan 09

<sup>92</sup> The Kennel Club statement found at: <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=1772&d=pndpr&h=pnhpr&f=pnfpr>

<sup>93</sup> Written evidence supplied to the inquiry by The Dog's Trust (January 09), Veterinary Surgeon Pat Morris BVM&S M.R.C.V.S (January 09), dog owners Kate Price (August 09), Carol Fowler (January 09) and Jemima Harrison (January 09)