

## **Assured Breeders Scheme Closure**

### ***Questions and Answers***

#### **Why is the scheme being closed?**

The Kennel Club has been conducting a two-year review of its registrations model and Assured Breeders scheme, and we have been collating data, research and breeder insights that have helped to shape our path forwards. The decision to close the Assured Breeder scheme has not been taken lightly and we will be ensuring that principles that the Assured Breeders scheme was founded upon – which is to support, reward and provide education around good breeding practice – will be embedded into the registrations model. However, with only five percent of puppies registered with The Kennel Club being bred by Assured Breeders – and demand for Assured Breeder puppies outstripping supply - we need to make sure we have a wider impact for the benefit of all breeders, puppy buyers and dogs.

#### **Why is The Kennel Club closing the Assured Breeders scheme when it could have adapted it?**

The changes that will be made to the registrations model are driven by the need to adapt the principles that the Assured Breeders scheme stands for – which is to support, reward and provide education around good breeding practice – and embed them into the wider registrations model. However, only five percent of puppies registered with The Kennel Club are bred by Assured Breeders, with the barrier of a membership fee for those carrying out good breeding practice, to cover the cost of assuring welfare and carrying out inspections. Going forwards, we will be continuing to educate around, and promote and incentivise good practice around health testing, whilst also ensuring that we provide better education and support around good welfare practices, without the membership fee cost. This will be complimented by a risk assessment and puppy buyer feedback system, which will give us a greater understanding about any welfare issues and how we can tackle them going forwards.

#### **Why is the scheme closing now, before the elements that will replace it can be fully introduced or described to us?**

We want to offer full transparency to all those who will be impacted by the scheme's closure, including members who are continuing to pay their renewals money. We wanted to ensure Assured Breeders were fully informed about the forthcoming closure of the scheme before we announced further initiatives – but we will be engaging with breeders over the changes and will be announcing further details in the months ahead. The changes to the registrations system will be phased, and will evolve over time, so we will not have every element in place before the closure of the scheme. However, overall, the review of our data and research showed that we needed to have a wider impact – across all registrations – and that we need to support and highlight good breeders. These are the elements that will underpin the new initiatives that will come, within the broader registrations model.

#### **When will the scheme close?**

The scheme will close on 31 December 2024.

#### **How will The Kennel Club support those who have been part of the scheme, and help puppy buyers to find good breeders, in the future?**

It is vital that we support and highlight good breeding practice and help puppy buyers to find well-bred puppies - and this will be central to the new registrations model initiatives that will be introduced. Further details about how this will be achieved will be given in the coming months, but signposting to well-bred puppies on Find a Puppy and improving the information and advice around good breeding - from health testing through to welfare - will be central to this. We want to ensure that the supply of the good puppies that we are

highlighting to buyers, can keep pace with the demand, and the membership fee was a barrier to this.

**Will there be engagement and the opportunity for breeders to shape the new developments that are to come?**

It is vital that the expertise and views of our valued breeder community shapes how we evolve in the future. The review of the registrations model and Assured Breeders scheme has been rooted in the collation of data and research that has given us vital breeder insights that have underpinned the development of new initiatives. Going forwards there will continue to be engagement with breeders and the opportunity to shape future elements in the registrations model.

**How are you going to monitor the welfare standards of breeders in the future?**

It is essential that we improve education for breeders and puppy buyers at every stage of their journey – using our website and emails, as well as wider awareness campaigns – to increase awareness about what good welfare looks like. We will announce a series of initiatives that will help to increase awareness and clarity about what breeders should be doing and buyers should be looking for. This will be complimented by a risk assessment and puppy buyer feedback system, which will give us a greater understanding about, and help us to tackle any welfare issues, so that we can better support breeders and puppy buyers.

**What happens if I have an assessment visit booked?**

Assessment visits will continue to take place up until 1 August 2024. If you have a visit booked and have questions or concerns you can contact a member of the ABS team. Members will continue to receive their reports from visits as usual.

**What will happen to our existing membership and certification period?**

We will extend members' certifications until 31 December 2024.

**How will this closure affect our individual accreditation status?**

Members accreditation will end on the same date of the scheme closure, 31 December 2024.

**I have a 5-star licence, and this was partly due to being an ABS member as per the star rating matrix will I lose this?**

The license would have been awarded based on historical compliance and your membership with the ABS. This should not affect your license status; however, we recommend that you contact your local authority for confirmation.

**Will I still get discount and be able to register as ABS?**

Yes. All membership services will remain in place until the scheme closes, including registration discounts, free Find a Puppy and Assured Breeder scheme listings.

**I don't want to follow the Assured Breeder health testing recommendations and requirements. Can I still register as an Assured Breeder?**

We would like members to ideally use the recommendations and requirements, but we will assess on a case-by-case basis as appropriate.

**Will I continue to receive a discount with the BVA and my dog food as a member benefit?**

Yes, discounts will remain in place until the scheme closes.

**Will any litters planned with puppies that have a date of birth prior to the closure date still be registered as ABS with discount?**

All puppies from ABS members that are registered before 31 December 2024 will continue to receive the discounted litter registration price.

**Can we still use the ABS logo and say we are members on our website until the close date?**

Yes. Typically, once an accreditation scheme has closed, the use of its logo is no longer valid, as the logo cannot represent current compliance. All members will be informed of next steps around use of the logo when the scheme is formally closed.

**When will the Find an Assured Breeder Service be removed from the website?**

31 December 2024

**Will there be a replacement dog breeders certification scheme to sign post good breeders made available?**

There are no plans to replace the scheme. Our ambition is to ensure that we raise the quality of all puppies that are registered with The Kennel Club, whilst incentivising and signposting good practice amongst all breeders, without the barrier of a membership scheme price.

**The KC has always advised people to go to an Assured Breeder, now this will not exist, where do I go to buy a well-bred puppy that I know has health tested parents, a breeder that will provide me with a contract of sale/puppy pack and has been visited?**

We will improve our Find a Puppy signposting towards, and prioritisation of, those who are health testing.

**Will there be continued support for puppy buyers that have purchased ABS puppies once the scheme has closed?**

Yes, support will still be provided by a dedicated team.

**Will there be support provided during the transition?**

Yes, we will continue to provide ongoing support to members throughout the process until the scheme's closure date, extending beyond where required.