



Demystifying The New Registries

Imagine, if you will...

You've just bought your very first car. You head straight for the Department of Motor Vehicles. You enter the building with a handful of papers and a heart full of pride. You plop your papers down on the counter and a disinterested clerk asks, "Can I help you?"

"I just bought a car and I want to get it registered."

The clerk takes one look at your papers and slides them back to you. "We can't help you here."

"What do you mean you can't help me here? You are the DMV, aren't you?"

"Yes, we are the DMV, but those aren't our papers. Your car is registered with the DYZ."

A quick scan of the office for hidden cameras and Alan Funt and you realize this lady isn't joking. The DYZ? What on earth is that? Confused, you ask, "Can you tell me where the DYZ office is located?"

She answers more sympathetically now, "I wish I could but nobody knows for sure *where* they are located. The address on their paperwork is not an office at all, but a P.O. Box." Can she mean a mail-drop, you are thinking?

With a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, you start to tell her how this is your first car and you can't understand why the car salesman would have lied to you like this. "Did the salesman *really* lie to you? Are you sure you specifically asked him if the car was registerable with the DMV?"

You have to stop a moment to think. Actually, no. He had told you the car would come with all the paperwork to register it. You just *assumed* that he meant to register it with the DMV. Who ever heard of the DYZ, anyway?

Surely you are just not asking her the right questions - this can't be happening. So you ask her who owns the DYZ and she explains that it was started by a bunch of used car salesmen who were tired of paying high fees and dealing with nuisance paperwork like VIN numbers. They didn't like the safety tests and emission controls required by the DMV so they started up their own registry to enable their cars to be quickly and cheaply registered with no questions asked.

Other customers are waiting now and you have run out of questions anyway so you gather up your paperwork, thank her, and

leave. But what in the world are you going to do now?

None of us will ever experience anything like this after buying a car, but every day hundreds of consumers find themselves in a similar situation after buying a new puppy. To their surprise, their "papered puppy" is not "papered" through the American Kennel Club at all.

Historically

American Kennel Club (AKC)

The American Kennel Club, commonly known as the AKC, was founded in 1884 with the intent of bringing together the growing number of US dog fanciers of the 19th century. AKC is still the most publicly recognized of the domestic registries. Today AKC also offers a vast amount of excellent information to the public at large about general canine welfare, health, and training.

United Kennel Club (UKC)

A significant number of the dog fanciers in the United States in the late 19th century were deeply devoted to the Pit Bull Terrier (PBT), but the PBT was not a recognized breed in the newly formed AKC. Consequently, in 1898 the United Kennel Club, referred

to as the UKC, was formed in order to create a registry for the PBT. Both the AKC and UKC built their registries on the sport of purebred dogs. UKC focused primarily on the Pit Bulls and the Coonhounds, while AKC encompassed all the other breeds.

Both AKC and UKC recognize a considerably greater number of breeds today than they did in their early days, but both still focus on the sport of the purebred dog and on improving the breeds by breeding responsibly to each breed's standard. They are still responsible registries and each has a code of ethics and a system of sanctions for member misconduct. They promote health testing, enjoyment of dogs, public education and general canine welfare, and both now have mandatory DNA testing protocols, UKC being the first to have instituted this responsible breeding safeguard.

An Explosion Of Registries

The number of new dog registries cropping up in the last few years was alarming to those who understood the purposes behind them. Commercial mills and backyard breeders alike had long-recognized that registered purebred puppies commanded a higher price than non-registered puppies. Until the retaliation of the puppy mills and brokers began in Spring of 2000 (a response to AKC's mandatory Frequently Used Stud DNA testing program), breeders who were already using multiple registries believed they had to offer identical puppies at different prices, depending on which kind of papers would be going with them.

As in our DYZ scenario, the purpose behind the new registries is to promote a no-questions-asked way for commercial breeders to 'register' their dogs so that they can

sell the puppies to a confused public at inflated prices - the higher prices the public had demonstrated it would pay for responsibly-bred puppies formerly registered exclusively with the AKC or UKC - back in the days when just being "registered" justified a certain degree of confidence.

Quite frankly, the pet shop customer is lagging considerably behind in its understanding of the current state of affairs - that yesterday's puppy mills gave birth to today's paper mills. And that the two are still firmly attached to each other by the umbilical cord of common ownership, membership, and ethics. The average pet shop customer seldom thinks to ask about the registry and most are oblivious even when they do finally see their off-brand papers. There are a growing number, however, that contact NoPuppyMills in outrage when they discover their purebred dog is not AKC registered. Their voices are beginning to be heard, and several states have attempted to address the issue of registration papers by passing "puppy lemon laws".

State Efforts

A handful of states have enacted legislation aimed at offering some protection to consumers who have purchased puppies which they later discovered were not registered in the manner in which they were represented at the point of sale:

New Jersey & California: In these two states, a pet shop has 120 days to produce the registration papers it advertised. Failure to do so gives the consumer the option of returning the puppy for a full refund, or keeping the puppy and receiving 75% of his purchase price back.

Minnesota: Allows only 90 days for a pet shop to produce the advertised papers. The consumer may opt to return the puppy for a full refund, or keep the puppy and receive a 50% refund of the purchase price.

Pennsylvania & Virginia: Both allow pet shops 120 days to produce the advertised papers, give customers a 100% refund if they return their puppy, or a 50% refund if they want to keep their puppy.

The operative word in all this legislation is *advertised*. In the literal sense, most stores do not advertise that their puppies are AKC. They simply advertise that the puppies are pedigreed, purebred, or registered. Any assurances of AKC papers are nearly always made verbally to the customer by a salesclerk or store representative. The burden of proof falls on the consumer to prove such a statement was made and it isn't always easy to prove a salesperson promised you AKC papers.

So, you ask, just who are these new registries and how did they come into being? There are far too many to cover them all here, but we will take a look at those major off-brand registries which are most frequently coming up in this writer's pet shop puppy research.

Continental Kennel Club (CKC)

Early in its history the CKC became the defendant in a lawsuit by the Canadian Kennel Club which had long used the acronym CKC. The Canadian Kennel Club is the well-established, widely-known dog registry for Canada - the Canadian equivalent of AKC in our country. Selecting a same/similar name or initials to that of a reputable, well-known organization in an effort to confuse the public is not uncom-

mon with the paper mill registries. Another example which comes readily to mind is the Universal Kennel Club whose acronym is indistinguishable from that of the United Kennel Club.

The CKC lawsuit resulted in only a narrow ruling that Continental Kennel Club papers would not be recognized as valid in Canada - an illogical outcome since the name itself, 'Continental', surely suggests that it encompasses Canada, which shares the same continent as the United States. Nevertheless, that was the ruling.

The Continental Kennel Club is by far the worst of the off-brand registries. Its only two registration requirements are:

1. The sire and dam's identifying information - this can be accessed and 'lifted' by anyone directly from the Westminster Kennel Club website, from AKC's show results webpages, or from any number of responsible breeder/fancier websites which proudly publish their dogs' pedigrees and show records;
2. A couple of witnesses' signatures (unsworn/uncertified/unverified) if actual AKC papers are not being submitted to verify an asserted claim of ownership.

In 1999, as part of an ongoing NoPuppyMills research project, the Continental Kennel Club accepted a bald-faced assertion of ownership and issued CKC registration 'papers' stating that the 1999 Westminster Kennel Club *Best In Show* Papillon "Kirby" was owned by one N. P. Mills (NoPuppyMills).

When registration procedures are so lax that the most high profile dog in the country can be successfully registered on paper to anyone who applies, it would be absurd to regard the Continental Kennel Club as a legitimate registry. And with no DNA program avail-

able, and no sanctions or penalties for fraud, all responsible breeders whose pedigrees are available to the public are at risk. Just imagine the damage that would be done to a good breeder's reputation when their champion dogs began showing up as the sire or dam on dozens of pet shop puppies!

America's Pet Registry, Inc. (APRI)

APRI, as it originally called itself, also lined a few attorneys' pockets after its owners selected a name whose acronym mimicked that of the American Purebred Registry. Consequently, America's Pet Registry is now 'officially' recognized as APRI in order to differentiate the two.

APRI will tell you that it requires AKC papers in order to register a dog. But one has to wonder whether this isn't just lip service to a policy as this writer has personally registered dogs with APRI which did *not* have AKC papers, simply by telling a sob story about why the papers were unavailable.

APRI does offer actual 'dog shows' around the Midwest where their dogs can actually earn APRI championship titles. Don't misunderstand me...this registry was started 'by the mills - for the mills' and while anyone can register a dog with them, their primary customers are the commercial breeders. APRI dog shows are judged by commercial breeders and brokers, and the entry information on their website states that any show with less than twenty-five total entries (and these are all-breed, remember) will be cancelled. With hundreds of breeds, what do you suppose are the odds that any APRI 'champion' ever competed against a single other dog of his own breed to earn his title?

Slim to none.

APRI is run by the Garners, a couple out of Arkansas who are licensed USDA brokers. In fact, both were charged with violating the Animal Welfare Act in 1995. The charges included hauling approximately 130 dogs in commerce without health certificates. They settled out of court in 1997 by accepting a \$1000 fine and a 6-month USDA license suspension.

American Canine Association (ACA)

The ACA is by far the most deceptive of the new registries. For starters, their website shows huge corporate offices in the Washington D.C. area, but a trace of their address reveals it to be, in reality, a mail and phone-forwarding outlet for this Pennsylvania-based company.

ACA's owner shares a similar background with APRI's founders. ACA was founded by the Kimbertal Kennel family in Pennsylvania. The Kimbertals have been ill-reputed breeders of primarily Doberman Pinschers and Rottweilers for many years. Numerous members of the fancy will argue that Kimbertal Kennels is solely responsible for the decline in the quality and health of both these breeds in the United States today.

ACA claims it has the largest canine health database in the world. What most consumers don't realize is that this database is only reporting on what are generally considered to be mere cosmetic flaws. The registrant presents a checklist to his veterinarian to sign stating that his dog is free of such listed 'conditions' as overbite, underbite, undescended testicles, or entropia. This signed form is then submitted.

ACA also claims it has a a

'veterinarian evaluation registry'. The data behind this legitimate-sounding base is collected by having each puppy mill fill out a simple form rating *their own* mill veterinarian(s). The ACA then lists these mill veterinarians on their website (which incidentally has changed its name from ACACanines.com to ACAVets.com), giving the clear suggestion that ACA has a direct relationship with each of the listed vets. The link from their website that identifies these vets is actually called "ACA Vets".

You can see how deceptive this is to the consumer and how an uninformed website viewer would get the warm fuzzies about such a wonderful-sounding organization. ACA even displays letters from the President of the United States praising their organization. (Perhaps I should publish the letter my 8 year-old daughter received from the President praising her for her idea to abolish all forms money in the United States so that poor people wouldn't be poor anymore.)

Find Out More

It is impossible to cover all the third-world registries in one column, but the reader will find all their website links at: <http://www.nopupmills.com/akc.html> These sites are well worth a visit if you want to discover firsthand more of the gimmicks and tactics which are enticing the mills and the backyard breeders to join up in droves. A few of the questions to ask ourselves as we review each of these sites are:

1. Why would a responsible breeder *choose* to affiliate with this kennel club rather than with a more credible organization *if he had the option?*
2. Does it take breeders suspended

elsewhere? (Or even bother to ask?)

3. Does it accept 'designer' mixed breeds that other registries will not? (The cock-a-poo or the schnoodle?)

4. Does it issue ownership papers for dogs based on no real evidence of ownership? ("Kirby", the Best In Show Westminster Papillon?)

5. Would membership here help to insulate an unethical or irresponsible breeder from the accountability of DNA testing, or from fines or sanctions or expulsion for fraud?

6. And finally, what could one reasonably assume about the breeding methods, health testing, or animal care practices of any breeder who would avoid AKC or UKC registry in favor of one of these organizations?

Hmmm. Food for thought?

Editor's Note:

In the next issue, The Livestock Report will look at "The IG Year in Review".

In December of 2002, Kim Townsend began offering a pet shop

puppy research service on her NoPuppyMills website. At the time of this publishing, she has researched over 600 puppy buyers' complaints. It looks as though the results are going to be alarming for those who love Italian Greyhounds.

Sadly, the IG is currently ranking in the top ten of the most requested-to-be-researched petstore breeds. And, based on this sample of 600, the IG is currently ranking #5 on the list of puppies most frequently sold out of pet shops.

We will be learning the final figures in the next issue. We will discover where these IG puppies are coming from, where they are being sold, how much is being paid for them, what ailments they are suffering from, what registry is being used most often (and least often), and many other facts and figures.

The IG Times is proud to have Ms. Townsend as a regular columnist. We are appreciative of her tireless effort to provide us with facts and figures about our breed which are not available anywhere else. Don't miss the IG Times Winter Issue Livestock Report! 🐾

