

Breeding for health in non pedigree dogs

Dog breeders today have a number of different considerations to make when deciding whether to mate two dogs together. The emphasis that each breeder places on their choice of breeding dog will vary according to what they are trying to achieve, but all breeders should consider temperament, characteristics, health screening and genetic diversity.

All dogs (like people too) are at risk of inheriting diseases. This quick guide is designed to provide some general information on health testing and schemes available for breeders of non pedigree dogs. Due to the wide variation found in a litter of crossbred puppies, breeders of these dogs have an extra challenge, as it is more difficult to predict the temperament and physical characteristics than in purebred dogs.

If you are new to dog breeding then you should consider seeking out experienced breeders of your crossbred dog for advice on how to breed responsibly. With cross-bred and purebred dogs alike, the general health of a dog is paramount, especially prior to breeding e.g. ensuring no infections. This short guide however, can take you through the steps to gain a better understanding of how to choose appropriate healthy parents and how to breed healthy, happy puppies.

Where to start?

The Breed Information Centre, available on the Kennel Club website, provides health testing recommendations for each Kennel Club recognised breed. Breeders of crossbred dogs should look at the health information for each breed that makes up their dog. If you are thinking of breeding a cross between a Labrador Retriever and a Standard Poodle, for example, you should consider carrying out all of the tests for both breeds: BVA/KC Hip and Elbow Dysplasia Schemes, BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme, DNA tests, and breed club recommendations.

How does inheritance work in crossbreeds?

If you are starting with 2 purebred dogs:

It is important to test both of your dogs for the breed-specific health concerns that are relevant to them; this includes both DNA and health testing schemes.

For some breed crosses, crossing two pedigree dogs once makes it less likely that certain inherited conditions will be passed on to that first litter of puppies. However, for many breeds, and especially for complex conditions like hip dysplasia, the same faulty genes are involved, which is why it is important to test. Health tests and schemes also give you important information about the health of your dogs.

If you are starting with 1 purebred dog, and 1 crossbred dog OR 2 crossbreed dogs:

It is important that if you use a crossbred dog for mating that you test each dog for the breed-specific health concerns that are relevant to them – both DNA tests and health screening schemes. For example, if you are breeding two Labrador-Poodle crossbreed dogs, then both dogs should be tested for all of the conditions that are relevant to both the Labrador Retriever and the Standard Poodle.

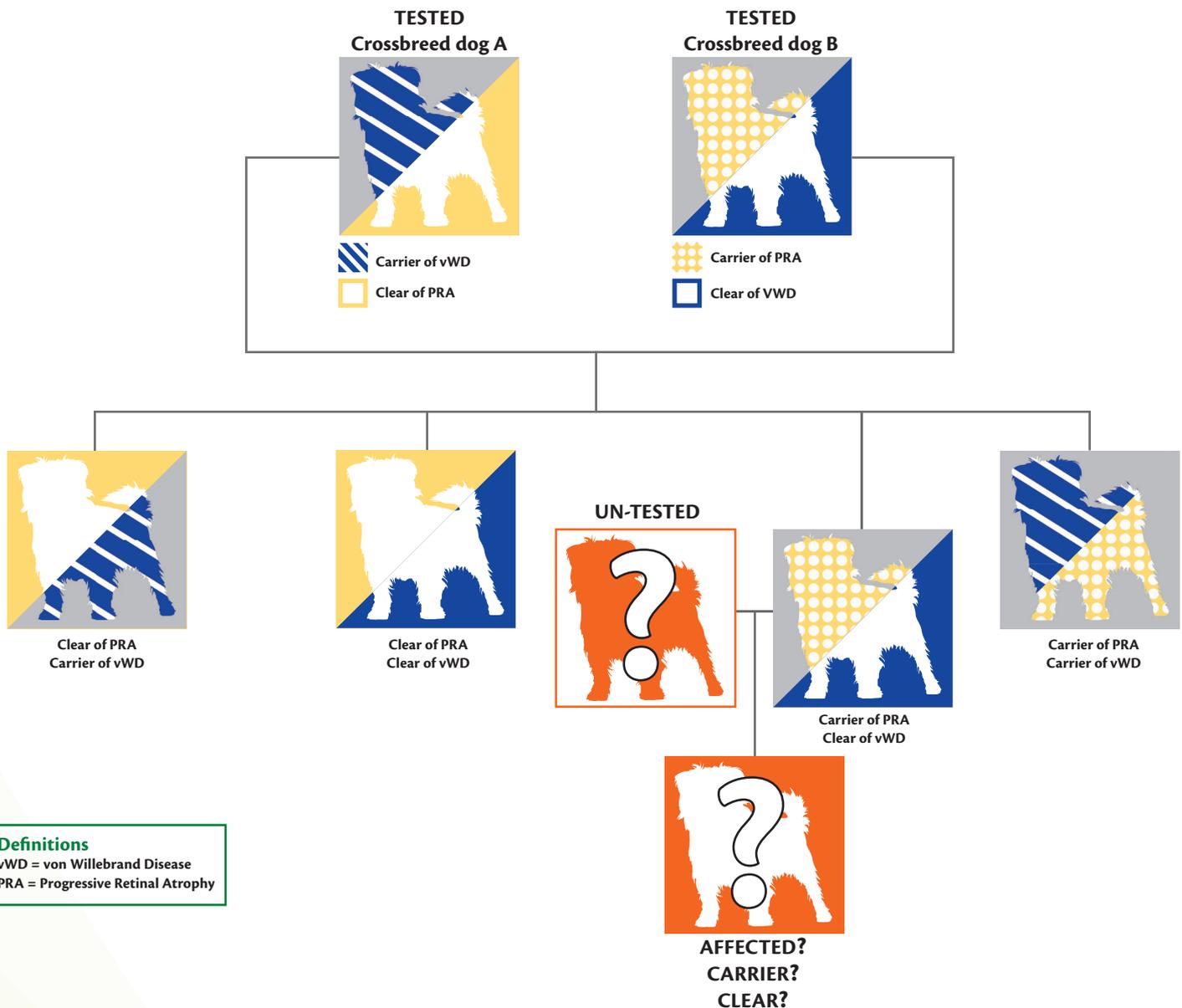
Any puppies produced from this mating are at risk of inheriting both known (and unknown) diseases. It is especially important to health test any potential parents you are considering before they mate. This will help you to make an informed choice and allow you to reduce the risks of any potential puppies developing inherited diseases. If you breed untested dogs together, you could be putting your puppies at risk of being affected for both specific conditions (identifiable by DNA test), or complex conditions, like hip and elbow dysplasia (identifiable by health screening).

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What about inbreeding?

It is important to consider inbreeding when breeding any kind of dog. Pedigree dog breeders continue to work hard to increase the genetic diversity of the breeds, because they know this is important to reduce the risks associated with inbreeding and to conserve the breeds for the future. If you are breeding crossbred dogs, it is just as important to work hard to not breed dogs that are closely related. Inbreeding may not be an issue when breeding dogs from two different breeds together, such as a Labrador and a Poodle, but will be an important consideration if mating two Labrador-Poodle crossbred dogs together. You may wish to keep your own mating records which can help you to avoid using close relatives of your dogs.

For more information please visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding

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