

The AKC and the Gene Pool

A closer look at the American Kennel Club's mission.

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Approved crosses to other breeds after AKC recognition are rare, but possible. In 1988, at the request of the Dalmatian parent club, the AKC approved the introduction of a Pointer into the Dalmatian gene pool in an attempt to introduce the genes for normal uric acid metabolism. The plan was to breed the progeny back to Dalmatians for several generations until theoretically all that remained of the Pointer influence was the gene for normal metabolism. But by that time, a new board was in control of the Dalmatian club, and they objected to the registration of the crossbred progeny. The AKC lifted the registration privileges for these dogs, so the Pointer genes never made it into the Dalmatian gene pool.

The AKC now requires a full membership vote from the parent club before granting approval for such ventures. In the 1980s, some Wirehaired Pointing Griffon breeders made crosses to Cesky Fouseks in an attempt to widen the Griffon gene pool. But without a priori parent club and AKC approval, they were unable to get AKC recognition of their stock.

The question may come down to the definition of a purebred dog. How many generations of closed breeding are necessary before a dog can be considered pure? How many generations are necessary before a breed can be considered at risk? When breed purity puts breed health at risk, compromises must be considered. The purest of breeds is worthless if it's extinct.