Breeding for Health Framework
What does it mean for you and your breed?

How did we get to Breeding for Health?

In 2016 the Royal Kennel Club launched the Breed Health and Conservation Plans in which each of the 222 recognised breeds was provided with an evidence base of scientific literature relevant to their breed, alongside summaries of the Kennel Club Data. This included registration data used for population analyses, as well as results from health screening schemes. Over the course of a decade we've continued to review and build on this evidence base and shared this with each breed, whilst also holding 150 meetings with breed clubs and their breed health co-ordinator to discuss this evidence and build a joint action plan together. Throughout this we learned a lot, and we want to thank all of those breed representatives who have been involved in that process with us.

In January 2025, recognising that Breed Health and Conservation Plans hadn't fully achieved the progress we hoped for in improving breed health, and in response to views raised by breeders through their breed representatives, the Royal Kennel Club invited Dr Alison Skipper to join us and undertake a review of the Breed Health and Conservation Plans. This review included interviews with Breed Health Co-ordinators and key stakeholders across the health and welfare sector, and its findings are now being published in the report*: A new future for dog breeding*.

The report's findings formed a basis on which we have built the Breeding for Health Framework and here we are going to walk you through what this may mean for you and your breed.

What will happen to our existing Breed Health and Conservation Plan and evidence base?

We have now combined all of the research, literature reviews and evidence from a decade of Breed Health and Conservation Plans into a Breeding for Health Framework evidence bank which the model below depicts:

Genetic diversity	Conformation	Breed-related disease and wellbeing
Population size	Visible conformation	Testable conditions
Harmful breeding practices/ popular sires	Distinctive breed features of potential concern	Untestable conditions
Limited pedigree data	Shifting conformation over time (conformational 'creep')	Temperament/ mental wellbeing

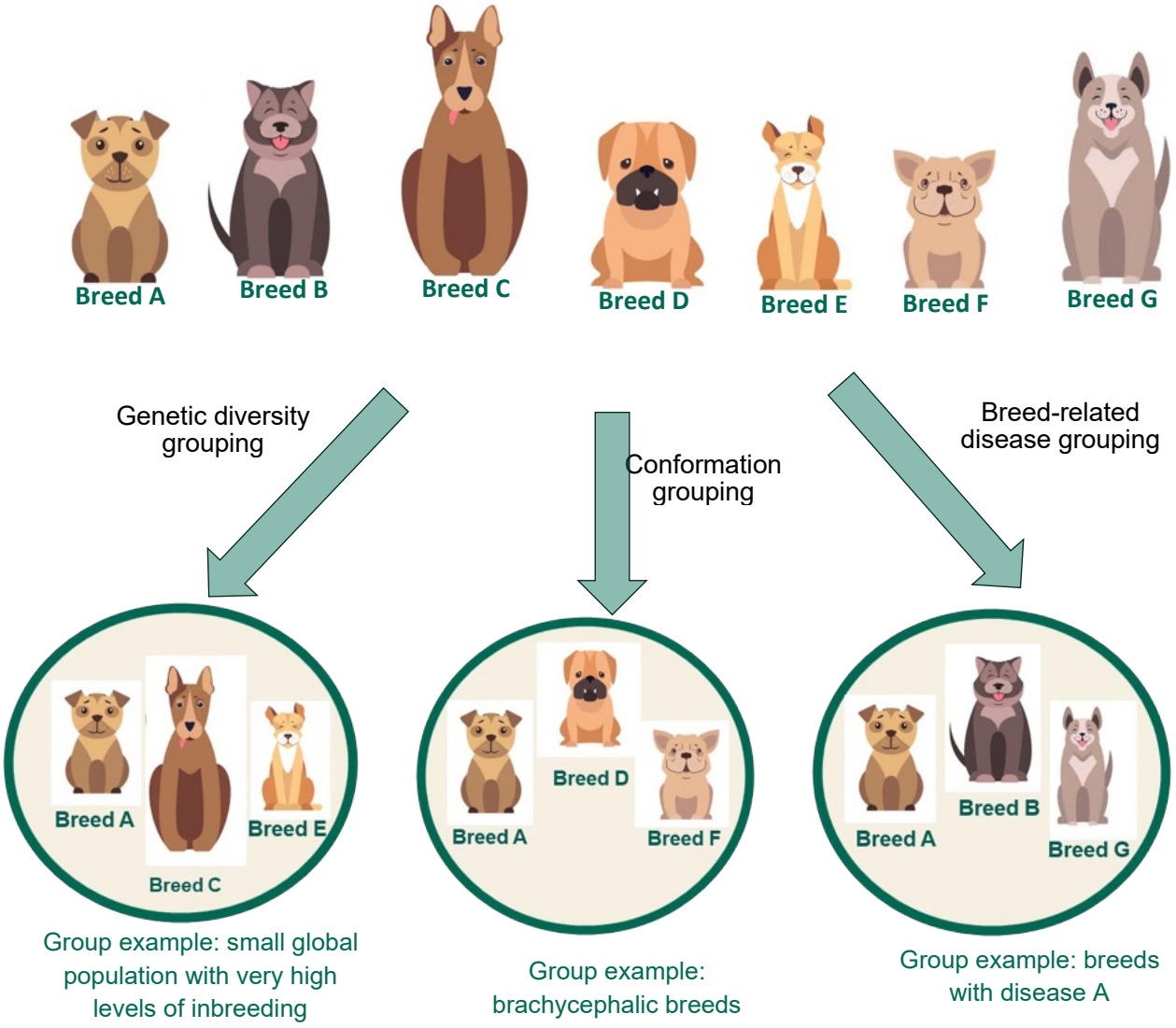
This will continue to be an evidence bank we keep updated, underpinning our work within the Breeding for Health Framework, which we will add to and will be available for access and reporting for breed communities at no cost. The easiest way to access reporting will be to contact your Breed Health Co-ordinator, alternatively for queries you can contact health@royalkennelclub.com.

We will holding a session in person on this evidence bank and doing a demonstration of what we hold and what we can offer to breed communities at our Breed Health Community Day in September 2026.

When will you meet with the Royal Kennel Club health and breeding team to discuss joint actions to improve the health of your breed and recieve support ?

One of the key findings of the review undertaken by Dr. Alison Skipper was the huge value in having breeds grouped together to discuss common challenges and shared solutions. In light of this finding our new Breeding for Health Framework operates a grouping system.

Breeds are grouped around the framework within the nine topics and will be invited to send representatives to those meetings and discussions to share their views, concerns and ideas. The model below shows how this can work. We would also encourage you to come and speak to the team with any questions about this new arrangement via your Breed Health Co-ordinator or health@royalkennelclub.com.



What changes will there be with the Breed Health Co-ordinator role, and what should wider breeders and breed representatives expect from the Royal Kennel Club as part of the Breeding for Health Framework?

We are going to be sending a lot of communications to your Breed Health Co-ordinator to share with your breed community, now more than ever they will need your support and we will need your support in regularly sharing these updates with the wider breed community so everybody feels involved and informed in Breeding for Health.

We have information about the Breed Health Co-ordinator role here, but we ask openly and warmly that within your breed you reflect on the support you will need to communicate and represent your views with the Royal Kennel Club and the skills you can draw from your community voluntarily in order to do this. We all love our breeds and we want to build a positive future for them. Breed Health Co-ordinators play a vital role in both communicating updates from the health and breeding team with breed communities and representing the views of breeders in those communities.

Breed Health Co-ordinators are solely appointed by breed club/ council communities and the Royal Kennel Club cannot influence or mediate the process of appointing Breed Health Co-ordinators, we respect the need for the breed to decide the appropriate people and skill sets required to support their breed in this role. For more information please email health@royalkennelclub.com

To find the Breed Health Co-ordinator for your breed and contact them via your Breed's A-Z page.

When will we be contacted about participating in the new Breeding for Health Framework discussions for our breed?

Looking at our Breeding for Health Framework our three projects for 2026 are those shown in the top row:

- Strategies for breeds with a small registered population (**Starting January 2026**)
- Developing a nose to tail veterinary visual assessment to measure conformationas an alternative to Innate Health assessment. (**Started November 2025**)
- Looking at an appropriate process to review when mandatory health testing for a specific test or clinical screening scheme (**Starting September 2026**)

If your breed has been identified for that group your Breed Health Co-ordinator will be contacted and will be asked to attend meetings to represent the views of your breed. For projects started or starting in January those emails have already been sent, please contact your Breed Health Co-ordinator for further information, or if you need any other support email health@royalkennelclub.com.

We will also be holding broader discussion focus groups with breeders on these topics, and those dates and opportunities will take place in February and March and will be confirmed and publicised shortly. We are in the process of discussing with relevant Breed Health Co-ordinators to organise these sessions, and will confirm the dates by the end of January.