

Is My Dog a Pure Epagneul Breton (French Brittany)?

(If the Pup is not UKC Registered as an Epagneul Breton it's probably not a Purebred French Brittany)

By Peter Wax, 2009

As an owner and occasional breeder of Epagneul Breton (French Brittany) I am often asked if I can certify my pups as 100% French Brittany. Since I have gone down the wrong road on this journey I feel personally qualified to answer this question.

In short if you live in the United States there are only two ways to guarantee you are purchasing a purebred French Brittany: (1) make sure the pup comes fully registered from the United Kennel Club (UKC) as an Epagneul Breton, or (2) purchase your pup in Europe with an export pedigree issued by the kennel club from a country which is a constituent of the Federation Cynologique Internationale (commonly referenced as the "FCI").

While searching for the holy grail of gundogs, you need to know what questions to ask as there is a lot of false information floating around. The United States is unique, in that the American Brittany Breed was developed here, and exists in large numbers. Some Breeders will claim there is an acceptable percentage of American Brittany, but that is now kindly referred to as a myth as the CEB-US requires a dog to demonstrate that it has no non-UKC registered Epagneul Breton in five generations before the dog can be approved for UKC single registration as a purebred Epagneul Breton. Thus, any breeder that tells you that a small amount of non-Epagneul Breton lineage is acceptable is most likely breeding pups with mixed bloodlines which cannot be registered as an Epagneul Breton. A purebred French Brittany (properly called "Epagneul Breton") has no acceptable percentage of American Brittany in it.

I learned this the hard way. In 2004 we purchased a "French Brittany" with a very well known French Brittany kennel name and personal assurances from the well known breeder himself that the dog was 100% French Brittany when in fact it contained some American Brittany in its ancestry. Requiring a UKC pedigree would have saved me from this misrepresentation.

There are a few reputable breeders of Epagneul Bretons in the United States that do not register with UKC as a matter of policy. However since the registration is a small percentage of the selling price of a puppy one has to ask the breeder why he does not provide this inexpensive certification which guarantees that the new owner can show or field trial the dog, as well as register any offspring with no problem.

The reason that the Epagneul Breton and American Brittany are so different is because the American breeders have bred dogs of very different phenotype. Many persons also believe that the American Brittany has been out crossed with English Pointers and Setters which led to the significant change in phenotype over such a short period of time. While this out crossing has produced a capable pointing dog, this breeding approach has resulted in a dog that is no longer and never will again be an Epagneul Breton. The American Brittany is typically a larger breed, with different conformation. Many persons familiar with the breed feel that the American Brittany bred for the field is emotionally tougher and wider ranging than its distant cousin the Epagneul Breton. Both the American Brittany and Epagneul Breton have earned their place in the pointing dog world, but they are distinctly different dogs.

If you have found the Epagneul Breton pup of your dreams and it is not UKC registered or supplied with an export pedigree from a foreign registry accepted by UKC, there is a third more difficult option to ensure the pup is a purebred Epagneul Breton. That option is to do your own pedigree research and submit it to the Club Epagneul Breton – USA for possible informal review <http://www.ceb-us.org/index.html>. The CEB-USA is the official parent club for the Epagneul Breton breed in the United States, as designated by the United Kennel Club Inc. which is the only official registration body for the Epagneul Breton in the United States.

The pedigree search needs to be accomplished prior to purchasing your pup as once purchased, a puppy is immediately loved and hard to part with. While an American Brittany is a fine dog, the pup is not an Epagneul Breton if it is not registrable as such by UKC!

In summary, the simplest, least expensive and surest way to certify that you are purchasing a pure Epagneul Breton born in the United States is to make sure your pup comes with a UKC Epagneul Breton registration.