

PBGVCA BREED PRESERVATION

Do we have a problem? If so, why?



Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen Club of America

If you don't think about the future, you won't have one.

The idea that the PBGV breed could actually become extinct was first brought to the forefront in 2017 when Dr. Carmen Battaglia published a report entitled "60 Breeds - Extinction in the Conformation Sport". Shockingly, the PBGV placed #50 out of the 60 breeds studied and is considered at "greatest risk" for extinction in conformation sport.

The Board discussed the issue at Harrahs in 2018.

One year later, in late 2019, the subject of Breed Sustainability was again brought up at the PBGVCA Monthly Board meeting. Several Board members sounded the alert: The number of litters and puppies registered with the AKC was falling precipitously.

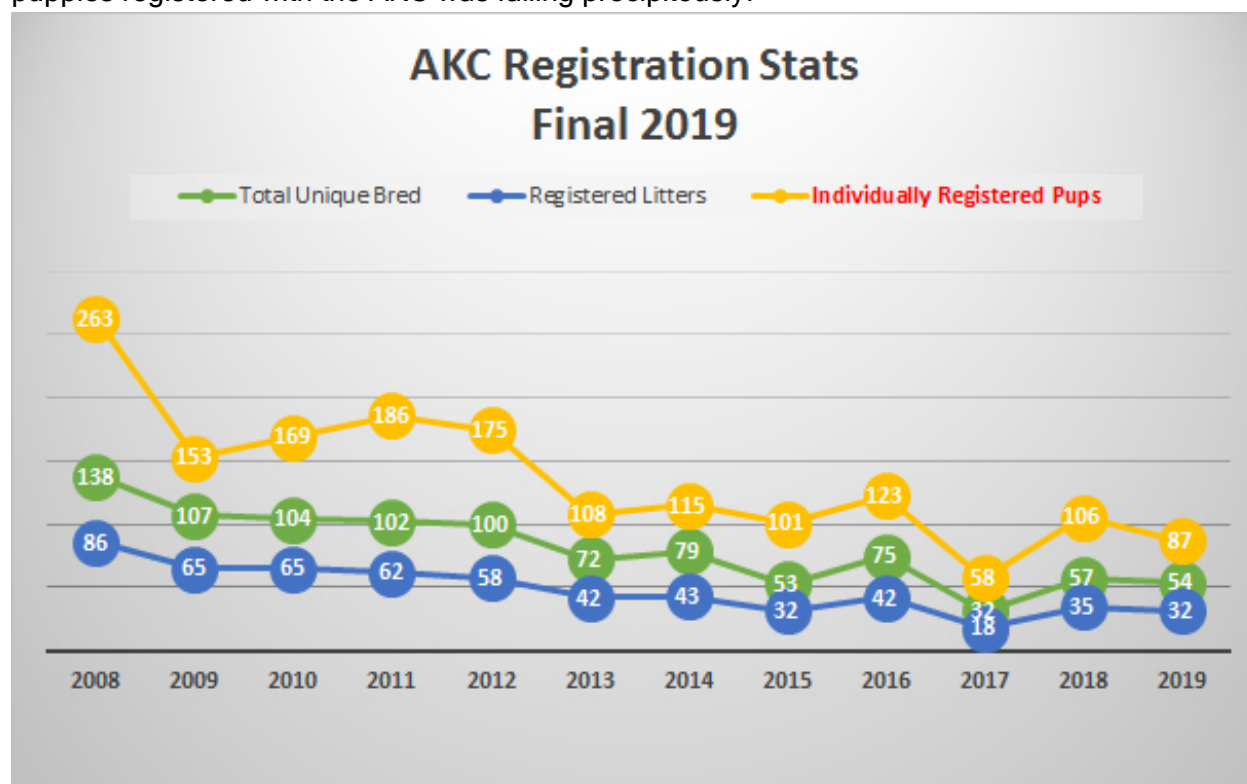
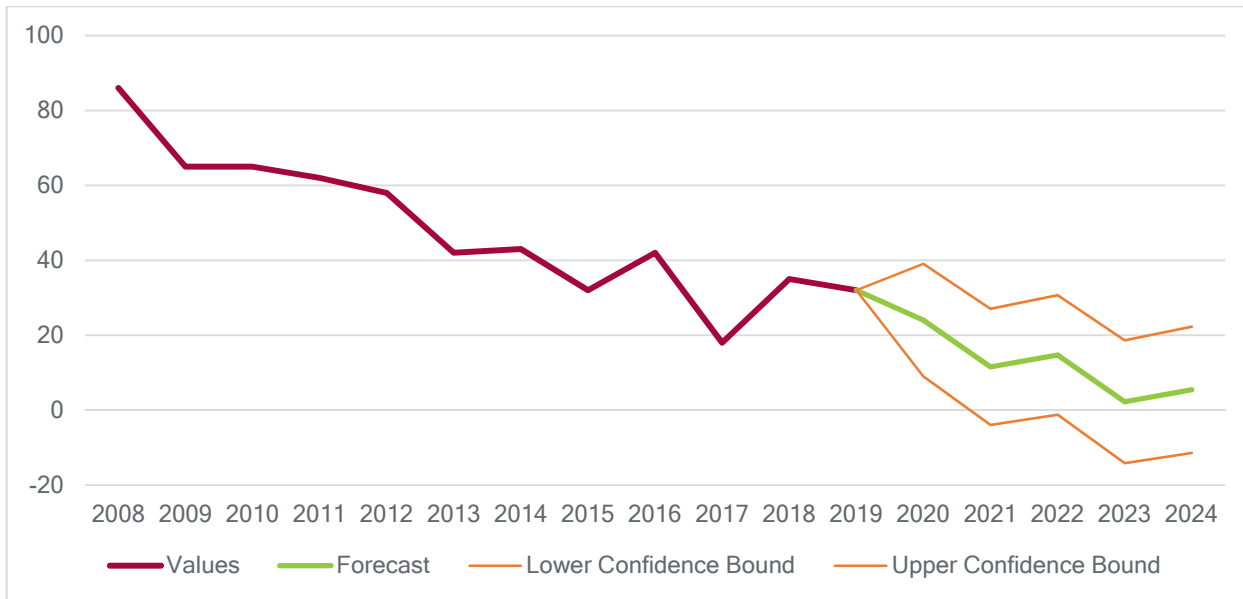


Figure 1: Totally Unique Bred: It is the total bitches (no duplicates) + dogs bred (no duplicates) in a year. Sometimes a dog is used multiple times within a year and they only count this as one.

Our breed is indeed in danger of becoming extinct. Looking at the PBGV Litter forecast below, litters of PBGV puppies will drop to nearly zero by 2023! Immediate action is required to reverse this trend before we get to a point where we can't breed high quality litters because we have NO breeding stock.

PBGV LITTER FORECAST



Historical data (Blue Line) is the AKC number of registered litters 2008 - 2019. The forecast was done with the Forecast module in 2016 Microsoft Excel. This model forecasts that the number of litters (Orange Line) will fall to ± 5 litters by 2023. Historical data (Blue Line) is the AKC number of registered litters casts that the number of litters (Orange Line) will fall to ± 5 litters by 2023.

These alarming statistics are a wake-up call for the PBGVCA and a call for action.

Jo Anne Hacker was given the go ahead by the Board to interview one or two other Clubs where a similar problem existed as well as to interview a representative sampling of Club members, active breeders and inactive breeders. The purpose of the interviews with breeders and Club members is to answer the question: We clearly have a problem, but why?

The purpose of the interviews with other Clubs in a similar situation is to answer the question: What did you do about it? (Results presented at a later date).

INTERVIEWS WITH CLUB MEMBERS AND BREEDERS

UNIVERSAL REASONS FOR A DECLINE IN PUREBRED DOG OWNERSHIP.

*Please note these are **not** facts necessarily, but personal observations by knowledgeable people who are close to the subject*

In the course of the interviews of individuals there were “universal” changes in the purebred world and there were “specific” changes applying to the PBGV breed. Let’s look at the “universal” changes first.

The most universal change affecting dog ownership is the change in the structure of families. With both adults in the home working, there are fewer families that can devote time to an endeavor like breeding. In fact, families spend less time at home in general. As for breeders, it is more difficult to be a smaller breeder (no staff) when both the husband and wife work.

In the old days, shows would marry well with 4H and like events. Today, dog shows cannot compete with all the other activities that consume families such as sports or technology. Even school demands more time of families now.

Further, today there is less land close to major residential areas and municipal codes governing kennels are more strict pushing breeders further and further out of the major metropolitan areas where they may not wish to be.

Ten years ago, animal rights groups heavily promoted the idea that the adoption of rescue and shelter dogs was the “right” thing to do and even now it is a very prestigious thing to say that you have “rescued a shelter dog”. These animal rights groups have had some success demonizing purebred dog owners in the eyes of the public.

The advent of “designer dogs” has taken off and undoubtably reduced the number of purebred dogs purchased.

Even many all-breed dog shows with their emphasis on conformation rather than what the dog can do or “who” the dog is (personality, temperament, abilities) may have unwittingly made it more difficult for a prospective owner to fall in love with a given breed because they don’t get to see the breed in action.¹

When many of our Club members started in conformation, most of the dog shows were 2 days only on Saturday and Sunday and 4 or 5 day clusters were not regular. Now most dog shows are 4 to 5 days with clubs joining together to host shows. This doesn’t work well for a working adult or a breeder since you would have to take too much time off in order to go. There are many more shows now and it seems as though many have gotten smaller.

Some feel that dog shows are not as fun as they used to be. The increase in the number of professional handlers has been discouraging for those who love to run the ring themselves and even more so for those who cannot afford to hire a handler.

In the late 1990's AKC told breeders to cut back on breeding. Some did.

And finally, the AKC Board tasked with supporting the Purebred and the Purebred Clubs is comprised of individuals who are older and they are making decisions based on the past. They are doing a disservice to the Clubs because they are not connecting with potential purebred dog owners using media popular today.

REASONS FOR DECLINE SPECIFICALLY IN PBGV OWNERSHIP

There are two parts to the equation causing this decline:

- The availability of PBGV's for new owners to buy (supply)
- The number of new owners who want a PBGV in their home (demand)

LET'S TALK ABOUT PBGV AVAILABILITY FIRST.

Recent statistics from AKC shows a 50% decline in the number of litters since the recession year of 2009. Even more alarming is that there is a steady decline of Primary Breeders. In 2019, only 30.4% of Primary Breeders were Club members. (Source: AKC, 2020)

PBGV - YEAR REGISTERED	Total <i>Litters</i> registered with the AKC	Number of <i>Breeders</i> who registered litters with the AKC	Number of <i>Litters</i> registered with the AKC bred by members of PBGVCA	Number of <i>Breeders</i> who registered litters with the AKC that are members of PBGVCA
2008	86	54	33	20
2009	65	49	22	17
2010	65	46	17	15
2011	62	45	18	10
2012	58	43	18	13
2013	42	30	20	13
2014	43	34	13	10
2015	32	25	7	6
2016	42	31	16	11
2017	18	12	5	3
2018	35	25	9	7
2019	32	23	9	7
2020 (2 months)	5	4	3	2

Several of the breeders that registered PBGV litters in 2019 are also now breeding Grands. This may have resulted in a reduction of PBGV litters.

There are virtually no “large kennels” breeding PBGV’s today. As big kennels disappear, litters decline and more is riding on fewer specimens.

We have an aging out of breeders, some forced to retire because of health or cost. PBGVCA is not doing anything to develop future breeders although some individual breeders are mentoring younger individuals who wish to breed.

In our attempt to have a healthy breed, we have made breeding more expensive. When we became a CHIC breed in 2007, we committed to doing hips and eyes. Hip evaluations can cost \$200-\$700. When POAG came along we added another \$75 test. Plus, many breeders do a DNA profile. Then there are all the shots and Vet appointments. Have we established testing demands that might make breeders have to reconsider the financial commitment and discourage potential younger breeders? Has it become too difficult to breed given the constraints such as having a “clear” stud? Do you have to, in fact, be wealthy to breed today? To offset the rising costs of health testing, should the Health and Rescue Foundation of PBGVCA consider expanding their financial support to help breeders continue to breed healthy PBGVs. This is particularly important as new health tests are developed for potentially preventable diseases.

Getting bitches and dogs far enough removed is more difficult as the breed numbers decline. We are not getting enough stock brought out of Europe to the US, and doing so is getting much more expensive (\$7k) with cumbersome “red tape”. Plus, our health requirements are generally more stringent than European standards and we may not like what we get. There are reported instances when a European breeder did not divulge health issues and problems arose. The Club does nothing to help integrate with European breeders or vet them.

As it relates to European stock, Europe is also seeing a decline in PBGV litters. It is very expensive to ship sperm and pay for artificial insemination. This is true in the US as well. Further it appears the number of Board- Certified Reproductive Specialists that know how to successfully complete artificial insemination is fewer and not always available outside of major metropolitan areas.

In an attempt to achieve a very healthy breed are we over spaying and over neutering? Should we encourage puppy buyers to breed by keeping dogs intact & making them available for breeding? Why do we have to “fix” a good dog?

AKC acknowledges 192 purebred breeds. *What is PBGVCA doing to make potential breeders want to breed PBGV’s or add PBGV’s to the breeds they already have?* Why aren’t we differentiating ourselves? How do we gain a reputation for having the best support network for new breeders? How do we encourage new PBGV owners to consider breeding? How do we get current breeders back into the Club to benefit from the many health benefits offered?

LET'S MOVE ON TO THE DEMAND FOR THE BREED.

What problems are seen as it relates to creating demand for PBGV's?

PBGV's face a lack of public awareness. Outside of the National Dog Show and Meet the Breed events, PBGVCA does very little to promote the breed. Even these two types of events could be looked at with fresh eyes and an effort made to engage outsiders.

In some parts of the Country it is difficult to even see a PBGV.

The Club does not do any work to identify the target market for this breed. This information is critical if we are to tailor our marketing communications, the content and composition of Saber Tails and our photography. Knowing our market also helps us to place PBGV's in the right home.

The act of creating a website may be too difficult for some breeders. How can PBGVCA make it easier?

We are not doing enough as a Club to anticipate demand. When there are high profile events such as Westminster, we are not ready for call volumes to go up and do little to help breeders to answer inquiries. Our social marketing does not acknowledge these events and play off of them.

The Club could do more to assist breeders to publicize litters and create a pipeline from buyer to breeder. In some cases, the Club could do more to help in the buyer screening process.

PBGV's are expensive. We have no real way now to help potential buyers get over this hurdle and make it financially easier for them to buy. Many PBGV owners are middle class families with many demands on their income.

Grooming is something that intimidates many potential buyers. The Club needs to find solutions that will help new Peeb owners with grooming or promote what we already have.

Not all new PBGV owners become Club Members nor do they receive Saber Tails. Often one PBGV is not enough. Is there a missed opportunity to get all new PBGV owners excited about the breed and the potential for a second PBGV in the family?

The Club does not have a library of high-quality images that can be used in communications. New social media channels demand new types of images.

Going forward, and acknowledging that this is a rare breed and most wish it to remain a rare breed, how do we keep our litter counts at a reasonable level to sustain the breed while maintaining health? What should that breeding number be?

PBGVCA Breed Preservation Initiative: 2020

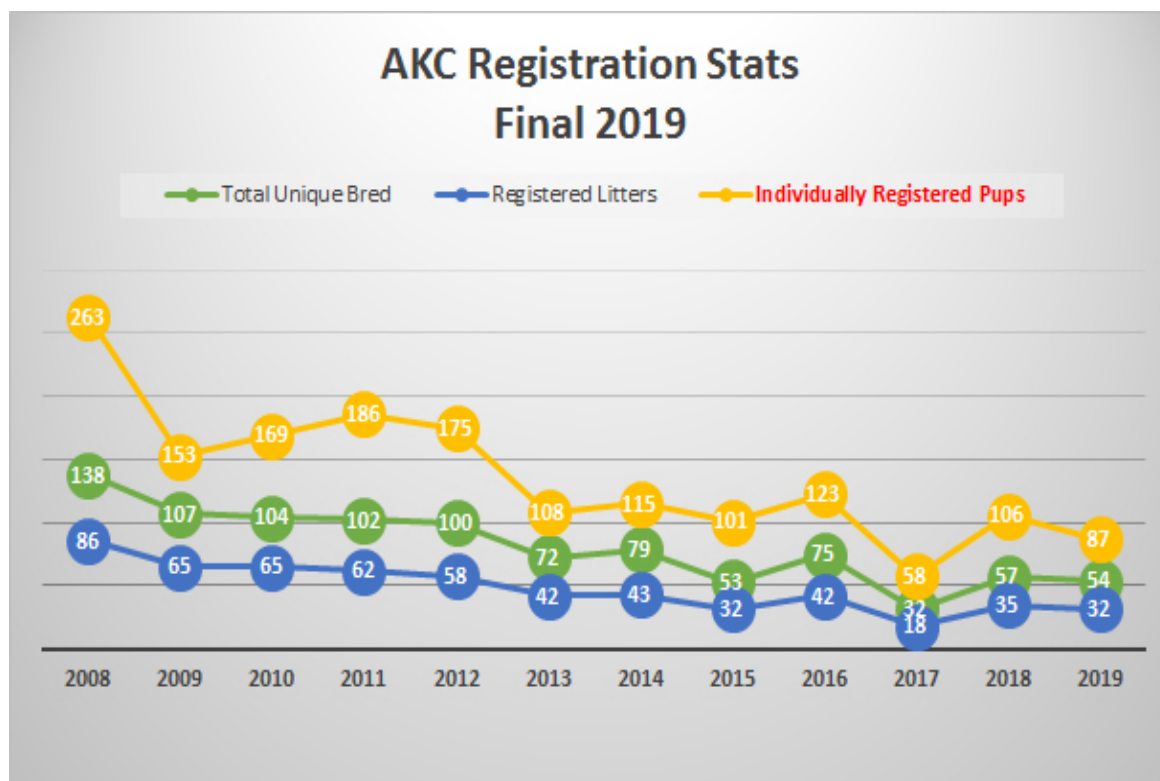


Figure 2: Total Unique Bred: Stud dogs and bitches unique sire and dam. Not same dog bred repeatedly.

PBGVCA BREED PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Veronica Scheer, Jo Anne Hacker, Robert Sweeney, Helen Ingher

The various Strategy Chairs will be responsible for building a small group of dedicated individuals who

The Goal of PBGVCA is to ensure that the PBGV, while a rare breed, will continue to be a viable breed in the United States for many years to come. Specifically, to implement strategies that result in 58-62 registered litters per year while preserving the health and character of the breed. This, in turn, is the mission of The Breed Preservation Committee.

will identify, define and put into motion plans to achieve the strategy. Further, these Chairs will carry their work forward to ensure the plans are periodically reviewed, adjusted & implemented.

Would you like to volunteer to serve on a Committee? Do you have specific skills you believe will fit nicely under one of the following strategies? If you do, please call the Chair and talk about what you might do to help preserve our wonderful breed.

Breed Preservation Fundraising Committee: Develop a fundraising strategy for Breed Preservation, execute.

Chair: Bev Childs 704-607-1660

Note: The work of this group has yet to begin as activities now in the implementation stage do not require funding.

Breed Preservation Public Relations Committee: Expose more potential dog owners to the breed and the true nature and versatility of the breed.

Chair: Coady Egan 781-375-6966

- Research and use the programs the AKC produces to introduce dog breeds to the public.
- Develop promotional materials, videos and a photo library that shows the breed in its many activities such as hunt, agility, obedience, rally and scent work.

Breed Preservation Membership Outreach Committee: Get PBGV families (and our entire membership) excited about spreading the word about PBGV's in their local communities. Get them involved.

Chair: Robert Sweeney 937-308-3990

- Adjust the composition and emphasis of *Saber Tails* to better appeal to the “pet owner” who constitutes 2/3rd of the readership
- Produce articles in *Saber Tails* that will harness the energy of our pet ownership base to promote the breed in their local communities.
- Increase the number of new PBGV owners who become Club members. Find ways to incent breeders to get their new puppy owners signed up.
- Develop an “Ambassador Program”. At the core of this program is owners promoting the breed within their own sphere of influence: their communities, their social circles and at work.

Encourage our PBGV owners to promote the breed in their local communities by giving them ideas, via *Saber Tails*, on how to engage the press with the breed, especially during high visibility periods such as Westminster or the AKC National Dog Show. Work with ones Vet to hold a rare breed “meet the breed” event in a parking lot.

- Develop and promote a Breed Ambassador card, similar to a business card, that can be customized by pet owners to carry with them and give to interested parties.
- Encourage owners to promote the breed on their own Facebook pages or websites. Ask them to ask their employers to use the breed in communications and advertising.

Breed Preservation New Owners Committee: Establish a clear (and exclusive, uncluttered) path for potential buyers to find out about PBGV's and a clearer process for referring potential buyers to Breeders.

Chair: Veronica Scheer 860-354-2617

- **Plan:** On the primary landing page for the website prominently show how prospective new owners can find out more about the breed.
 - **What has been done:** Updated and simplified the PBGV.org home page with a scrolling pictorial banner telling the PBGV story from a French hound – *to puppy love – to their active nature – on to the special bond they engender in us that makes us smile.* The

story continues with a clear, uncluttered path to answering the question "*Is a PBGV Right for you?*" along with the many activities one can enjoy with their PBGV.

- **Plan:** Create the concept of Breed Ambassadors who are immediately available to answer questions about the breed and refer prospective buyers on to potential owners.
 - **What has been done:** Enhanced our former Breeders' Spotlight page now named "Ask of Breed Ambassadors". Added pictures, breeder web pages free to members, and member who are listed have agreed to promptly speak to prospective new PBGV owners. Setup a PBGVCA Help Desk that operate much like a customer support area manned by members.
- **Plan:** Establish a place where club members and prospective buyers can easily go to find out what adult dogs or new litters are available and how to inquire about them.
 - **What has been done:** Setup two new directories to work in tandem with our existing public member directory. They list members with puppies and/or adults available and for breeders a stud dog service directory listing members with stud dogs linked to the stud dog information record in our Pedigree/Health database.
- **Plan:** Develop and use on all printed materials a QR (quick response code) that can link them directly to an article: *Is a PBGV right for you?*
 - **What has been done:** Setup a special "landing page" linked from our new QR codes (quick response code) now appearing on all printed material. The landing page covers: *What is a PBGV, Is a PBGV Right for You, and Ask Our PBGV Ambassadors.*

Breed Preservation Message Guidelines Committee: Create a consistent message and consistent message guidelines about the breed to make it easier for the novice to participate locally and for professionals to do it correctly in our primary media such as *Saber Tails*.

Chair: Jo Anne Hacker 425-241-2266

- Develop and promote a Press Brief that can be used by pet owners to engage local publications in promoting the breed
- Develop and promote ideas for Pet Owners to have their own "meet the breed" in their local communities. Give them the tools and ideas to be successful.

Breed Preservation Expanding Breeding Stock: Figure out how PBGVCA can increase the PBGV breeding stock across the Board. Expand the gene pool.

Chair: Helen Ingher

Assists: Jan Zigich and Donna Bruce

- Develop a Semen Bank
- Reach out to foreign breeders to have their information included in database and to have a more open dialogue about available stud dogs and bitches.
- Encourage non-member breeders to join the Club and be part of the overall breeding process.

Breed Preservation Breeder Network Committee: Identify how to strengthen our Breeder Network to improve identification of new litters, puppy placement, identification of new studs, mentoring of new breeders, interactions with our foreign affiliates, identification of breeding problems and strategizing about solutions.

Chair: Helen Ingher

Assists: Donna Bruce

- Develop strategies to have greater foreign membership in PBGVCA
- Develop a new Saber Tails Column called “Puppy Talk” authored by breeders to encourage new breeders and current breeders to seek help when needed from breeder mentors.
- Continue to develop the PBGVCA Breeders Group online with Facebook
- Create a mentor list to help new breeders.
- To address breeding problems, support Veronica in encouraging breeders and others to update the database to include health related issues, stud dog listings, and status of availability.

Breed Preservation New Breeder Committee: Identify, engage, mentor and support at least 3-4 new breeders a year.

Chair: Lindley Henson & Cam Henson, co-chairs

- Create a Juniors Club affiliated with PBGVCA. Identify benefits, activities and submit a budget to the PBGVCA board. Provide leadership.

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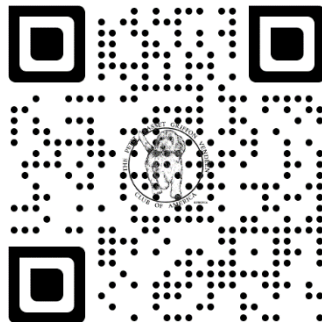


Figure 3: Scan QR Code: To learn more about PBGVs open your camera app on your smart phone, position phone so code appears in viewfinder, & follow directions.