

# Bernese Mountain Dog Puppy Buyer's Guide



Website ~ [bmdca.org](http://bmdca.org)

This Guide is produced by the BMDCEW.  
Parts of the Guide are borrowed from the BMDCA Website, the  
BMDCNV "Resource Guide" and the BMDCEW Website.

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## INTRODUCTION

Anyone who owns a BMD will tell you that there is nothing better than owning, loving and caring for a Bernese Mountain Dog. However, we need to explain to you the whole picture - not just the forest, but also the trees so you can make an informed decision whether the Bernese Mountain Dog is the right breed for you and your family. Please assess your own strengths and weaknesses and determine how well your personality and abilities are suited to that of the Bernese Mountain Dog. A successful enduring match will be made when the specific breed characteristics are compatible with your human lifestyle. There is a vast network of BMD enthusiasts who will do all they can to help educate you and help you develop the special relationship offered only by a BMD.

## FIND OUT A LITTLE...

The Bernese Mountain Dog was developed as a companion dog and does best when integrated into a family's home and lifestyle. These dogs are



often very dependent on their owners and some can be come difficult to manage if left unattended for long hours everyday. Puppies require several months of extensive attention to housebreak and train. An owner can count on about six to twelve months of time to be devoted to

house breaking and teaching a puppy basic dog manners. BMD pups can be very destructive if left to their own devices. Safe toys should be provided to accommodate the puppy's desire to chew during the

teething stage. The use of a good sized dog crate will prevent destructive habits from developing and potentially can save a dog's life. Puppies should not be left unattended for long hours. The early development of a good working relationship and trust between dog and owner will lead to a rewarding life together. The Bernese Mountain Dog is a large dog. The breed is not well suited to environments or owners where exercise is not possible or convenient. These dogs were developed as working farm dogs, not as lap dogs. Even so, most BMDs will be delighted to make a visit to their owner's lap when invited. Exercise requirements for the breed are somewhat variable, depending on the BMD's temperament and energy level. A minimum of 30 minutes of exercise per day will keep most BMDs in good physical condition. Some dogs will require three times that amount of exercise to be satisfied and kept in shape. BMDs need exercise through out their lifetimes. Puppies should never be forced to exercise for long periods nor should they be kept from walking or running under safe, supervised conditions. Puppies should NEVER be allowed to roughhouse with older dogs, as permanent injury to growing bones, joints, muscles and ligaments may occur. Bernese Mountain Dogs are generally good-natured. Some BMDs can be reserved and even fearful of strangers. Some BMDs can be dog aggressive which makes them unsuitable for multiple dog households.



The BMD is one of the most enjoyable of the large breeds. The devoted loyalty, sense of humor, easygoing, quiet natured, strong will to serve and affectionate qualities make the breed a good family pet.

BMDs are typically excellent with children, as they tend to recognize a child and immediately quiet all actions. While some BMDs may be aloof with strangers, this should not be confused with shyness. When company visits your home, many BMDs will watch the situation for a little while before coming to accept a visitor with a quiet approach followed by leaning into the visitor's leg. This is how Bernese became known as 'leaners', which is especially true of the males. A must for all Bernese is socialization and training. Attending puppy socialization classes, and at a minimum beginning obedience classes at a local kennel club or private dog training facility are highly recommended to maximize a BMD's chances of becoming a canine good citizen. Many Bernese do very well in advanced obedience courses, conformation, drafting, tracking, agility, etc. Owners should look forward to a lifetime of training and working with their BMD. Most Bernese do best when trained with enthusiasm and a kind but firm hand. Most are very willing to please but some can be quite stubborn.

Some Bernese are very smart and want to do things their own way which provides their owners with training challenges. Hard hands and harsh training methods can easily break the spirit of many BMDs. The Bernese Mountain Dog carries a heavy coat requiring considerable grooming. When Bernese cast off their coats, daily brushing may be required to keep hair to a minimum in a home environment. Removal of hair coat as it is being shed is also necessary for the dog to maintain healthy skin condition. Count on grooming and vacuuming often (daily) to keep floors, furniture and the children free of BMD fur. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with BMD health issues, discussed later.

## HEALTH

The #1 cause of death in all domestic dogs is US: people! About a third of the dogs born in the U.S. never see their second birthday. They are euthanized as unwanted, abandoned or lost dogs in shelters, others die getting hit by a car when running loose. The cheapest form of health insurance is buying a leash, learning how to use it, and training your dog.



## LIFESPAN

The Swiss have a saying about the lifespan of Bernese Mountain Dogs.. They say, 'three years a young dog, three years a good dog, three years an old dog -... all else a gift from God\*. At this time, the average age of a BMD at death is about 7 years, though many books say the average life span is 10 to 12 years.

## ORTHOPEDICS

Structural problems can afflict our dogs. Hip dysplasia (HD) is a progressive, degenerative disease involving malformation of the hip socket joint. HD ranges from very mild with no apparent effects, to severe requiring surgical correction or euthanasia. Hip dysplasia appears to have both genetic and environmental causes. The term 'hips clear\*' is often utilized to imply a dog is structurally sound. Hips aren't the only boney structure that can be unsound. Current data suggests that in BMDs, there may be more elbows dysplasia (ED) and OCD of the shoulders than there is HD. Soft tissue injuries to ligaments and muscles can result in lameness as can Panosteitis, a developmental condition that causes pain in long bones during growth. Any persistent lameness requires examination by a veterinarian.

## ORTHOPEDIC EVALUATIONS

The oldest organization for evaluating joint status is the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). Radiographs (X-rays) of a dog's hips or elbows are analyzed by radiologists to determine the presence or absence of orthopedic disease.



Hips or elbows deemed free of dysplasia will get a numbered OFA certificate with a rating of Fair, Good, or Excellent.

If there is evidence of dysplasia, no number is assigned. An OFA # on a parent does NOT necessarily mean the offspring will have good joints, but breeding from parents not affected by orthopedic disease is important to conscientious breeders. Please see the "RESOURCES" section of this booklet for the names and addresses of other screening organizations. PennHIP also evaluates hip

status. Breeders should provide evidence their dogs have been screened for orthopedic disease.

## BLOAT

Bernese Mountain Dogs have a body type which makes them susceptible to bloat, which can be a life threatening emergency medical situation. This can run in families.



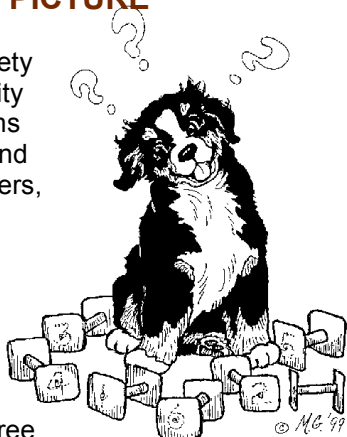
## EYE DISEASE

Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) is a hereditary disease of the eye that has been identified in a few Bernese Mountain Dogs. The Canine Eye Registration Foundation (CERF) is an organization that collects data on dogs examined by members of the A.C.V.O. and registers those dogs that have been certified free of evidence of heritable eye disease. CERF evaluates eyes for the presence of eye disease. Even though dogs have a CERF number (indicating that the parents are not affected (blind) nor have PRA) this does not totally guarantee that their offspring will be genetically clear of PRA. Cataracts are also found in some BMDs. There are many different types of cataracts. Some cataracts affect vision while others do not.

## THE BIG HEALTH PICTURE

Individual dogs can be affected by a variety of ailments that affect longevity and quality of life. Among the most common problems are cancer, autoimmune disorders, hip and elbow dysplasia, allergies, thyroid disorders, bowel disorders, torsion and bloat, eye disorders including PRA, cataracts and entropion. It is always best to inquire with individual breeders as to what health problems may be more or less prevalent in the families of dogs from which their breeding stock come.

No family of Bernese Mountain Dogs is free from health problems typically seen in the breed. Most breeders conduct genetic testing on dogs they are using for breeding purposes. Most breeders pay very close attention to selection of breeding pairs to minimize the occurrence of health problems. No breeder can offer you a 100% guarantee that the pup you get will not face health challenges.



## HEALTH RESOURCES

The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America maintains health resource pages offering in depth coverage a variety of health conditions and challenges affecting Bernese Mountain Dogs. Many Bernese can live long healthy lives. But, awareness of health issues by both breeders and owners is essential to enhance management and improve the quality of dog's lives. Genetics and health are interlocked in many cases so breeder understanding of health issues that exist in families of Bernese is essential if improvements in health and soundness are to be made over generations of breeding. Please visit the BMDCA Health pages for more information on Berner health issues.



BernerGarde maintains an open data base of health and orthopedic information for the Bernese. BernerGarde resources are accessible by contacting either BernerGarde or through any local club. \*Some of this information contained in this section is borrowed from the BMDCNV Resource Guide.

## THINGS CONSCIENTIOUS BREEDERS DO

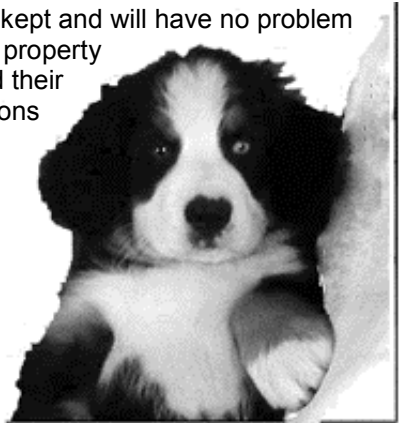
- ◆ Provide safe nurturing conditions for their dogs and for any dogs they place with other owners - Because the welfare of BMDs should be the paramount goal of any breeder.
- ◆ Learn about your interests and goals in dog ownership - Because if the breed or individual dog and its owner aren't well suited to each other, the dog could develop behavior or health problems causing the owner and the dog to be discontented.
- ◆ Know their family of dogs well and will not place a dog before they know if a dog is a good match with the lifestyle and expectations of the buyer - Because every family of dogs possesses unique traits and has its own particular management concerns which affect the dog's suitability for its owner.
- ◆ Be committed to developing and sharing information on BMD health and management issues - By having a resource, who can offer valuable dog management advise, you can save time and money, and maximize your effectiveness training and caring for your dog.
- ◆ Believe it is important to have extensive information on the health, structure and character, plus any other useful information about their dogs and those dogs' ancestors, before undertaking any breeding - Because you are more likely to get a dog that will live a long life in good health, if breeding dogs are paired to maximize family strengths and minimize family weaknesses
- ◆ Will never tell you that their dogs come from pedigrees with no health problems - The fact is, ALL BMD pedigrees contain dogs with good and problematic traits. A breeder who is able to assess and represent an accurate picture of their breeding program is realistic and honest
- ◆ Will try to gather and share pertinent genetic information on their breeding dogs, which includes providing, upon request, copies of certifications for hips, elbows, eyes, heart, thyroid, and von Willebrands disease as issued by recognized registries such as





OFA, GDC, CERF, etc... - When dogs produced, from a well executed breeding strategy, undergo genetic screening, the information can be applied by the breeder to make breeding choices that minimize faults in ALL dogs, both future breeding animals as well as those placed as non-breeding pets.

- ◆ Will not sell breeding/show stock to owners who are not seriously interested in pursuing those objectives - Breed/show stock often cost more and require a considerable commitment of time and resources by both the breeder and the owner
- ◆ Provides you with a pedigree of the puppy, including health, structure and temperament information on the parents and ancestors - Because the depth of pedigree information that a breeder has and provides allows both the breeder and you to have a firmer grasp of what can be expected in puppies and adult dogs
- ◆ Provides you with a written contract before there is any exchange of money, including a deposit - It is important for you to have a written record outlining the breeder's and your responsibilities, including definition of what kind of dog and services you are paying for.
- ◆ Will clarify, to your satisfaction, any unclear contractual obligations or any notable conditions which could act to nullify or change any guarantees - Allows you to be assured that the contract you will sign, at the time you get your dog, is a workable and acceptable agreement between you and the breeder.
- ◆ Provides you with copies of AKC registrations for both the sire and dam - Proves your puppy is a purebred BMD, and further, that the parents of your dogs were registered as breeding stock animals with the AKC.
- ◆ Takes pride in how their dogs are kept and will have no problem with you scheduling a visit to their property
  - Allows you to meet the dogs and their owners so you can see the conditions and assess the character of the breeder and their dogs
- ◆ Will never sell pups or dogs to agents, brokers or pet shops Because the resellers' focus is not the welfare of dogs but is for the resellers' financial gain
- ◆ Accept lifetime responsibility for dogs they place, including assisting in re-homing a dog if necessary - No breeder should ever be responsible for adding to society's burden of unwanted, homeless animals.



- ◆ Will provide veterinary references and/or references of people who already own dogs from the breeder. - Vet references or references from people who have actually bought dogs from the breeder allow you to get someone else's view of that breeder.
- ◆ Should always try to be available to answer questions and encourage you to share information and comments you have about your dog - Provides you with a breeder who cares about the kind of dogs they produce and one who is interested in helping you with your dog.

## **CONSCIENTIOUS BREEDERS BELIEVE**

### **All dogs for breeding should be:**

- ◆ Examples of the breed that reflect the characteristics in the American Kennel Club Standard for the Bernese Mountain Dog
- ◆ In excellent health
- ◆ Granted full AKC registration

### **All Puppies should be**

- ◆ Offered optimal conditions conducive to their survival and adjustment from birth until they are ready to be adopted by their new family
- ◆ Kept in quarters that are warm, clean and dry
- ◆ Offered appropriate nutrition to insure proper development
- ◆ Offered a stimulating and nurturing environment designed to allow for maximum physical and mental development
- ◆ Socialized, exposed to handling and human contact - to ensure pup's ability to bond with and trust humans



## **ABOUT BREEDER'S APPROACH AND FOCUS**

- Breeders engaged in perpetuating any breed should take the breeding of dogs seriously. The decision to produce offspring from a carefully selected breeding pair requires that both breeder and stud dog owner make every effort to ensure that progeny will be good examples of the breed.
- Breeders also make special efforts in selecting homes for their pups so they will live happy lives with people who appreciate their value and will provide necessities for the pup to develop and maintain a good life.
- Open, honest sharing of facts concerning health, structure, temperament and type characteristics of BMDs is essential.
- Every breeding dog came from a family of dogs. Understanding all assessable traits possessed by families of dogs, in addition to accurate evaluation of traits possessed by individual dogs used for breeding is critical to insuring a promising future for the breed.
- Puppies should be carefully evaluated and placed by the breeder. Puppies placed as future breeding stock should be assessed in terms of their potential to contribute positively to the gene pool.





- Breeders placing a dog as breeding stock must assume the responsibility for ensuring that the new owner is committed to applying standards and management practices that will enhance breed welfare.
- Puppies that are evaluated prior to placement and deemed to be lacking in breed characteristics sufficient to be used as future breeding stock should be sold on spay/neuter contracts and AKC Limited Registration.
- Effort should be made to determine that the owner's management and home will be adequate to meet the dog's needs and NOT result in the dog becoming a public burden or nuisance.
- Breeders should define for themselves and others their priorities and purpose for breeding BMDs.

## BEFORE PURCHASING CONSIDER

Though initially BMDs may appear to be the ideal pet there are disadvantages! The following are some points that require thought and considerations before you bring a BMD into your home.

**Responsibility** - Before bringing a BMD into your family, every family member should be willing to accept responsibility for the needs of the dog. We believe owning a BMD is for life—if you think they are disposable, please consider buying a stuffed animal.

**Size** - BMDs are a large breed. Males range in height from 24"-28" at the shoulder and weigh from 85-120 pounds. Females stand from 23"- 26" and weigh between 65-100 pounds. BMDs have active tails that can make clean sweeps of tables. Uncluttered houses and yards are a must.

**BMDs need human companionship** -They can not be confined in isolation for long periods and must be made a part of the family. Due to their size and heavy black coat, BMDs require shelter from inclement weather (hot summer sun for example) ~ a shady retreat with plenty of fresh water at all times is a must if the BMD is to spend any time outdoors.

**Exercise** - BMDs need consistent daily exercise (30 minutes a day is usually sufficient). If not they may have trouble in adjusting to the calm house pet role that most owners expect. Remember if you are looking for a dog to jog with you 365 days a year this is not the breed for you.

**Grooming** - BMDs are long and double coated and blow their coats usually twice a year. Because of their coat brushing every few days is to your advantage. Bathing, brushing their coat and teeth, and trimming nails are basic regular requirements. If you require a fastidiously kept house, don't get a BMD. There will ALWAYS be dog hair around, especially on rugs, furniture and, oh yes, in your food! All family members should visit with BMDs before bringing one into your home to make sure no one is allergic to BMD fur.



**Health and Care** - Hip and elbow dysplasia and cancer are concerns for all BMD owners. Most breeds have some of these conditions, and some BMDs will never have these problems, but we think it best for you to know the worst. If you want more information about these conditions, please contact us and we will help you. Veterinary care is important with yearly routine examinations, yearly vaccines, heartworm and parasite checks and heartworm preventative medication. Feeding one dog for a year will cost approximately \$300 to \$400, depending on the type of food and any supplementation provided. Veterinary expenses for the first year (puppy) will be between \$100 and \$400, depending on the veterinarian chosen and the locale. Though many expenses are hidden in other bills (food, dishes, leashes, collars, treats, brushes, shampoos, training classes and toys), they exist!

**Training** - Everyone owning a BMD should make their dog a good canine citizen. A good beginner course costs between \$45. and \$75. Moreover BMDs tend to be sensitive or soft in many situations. They must be handled carefully with a loving, firm but nonetheless gentle hand. An obedience course is a must for a dog of this size, but it must be one that focuses on positive reinforcement -not harsh corrections.

**Guarding**-Though BMDs may bark and growl defensively it is not instinctive for them to attack. BMDs can be protective of family and property, but if you are looking for a vicious guard dog, look to another breed. Fencing - A fenced yard is ideal with fencing at a minimum of four to five feet high. A BMD should not run at large and become a public nuisance.

**Addiction** - Very few people own only one BMD. We simply find them habit forming. They are not cheaper by the dozen, however, and two BMDs cannot live as cheaply as one , and so on, and so on.

## BE AN EDUCATED BUYER

Getting a well bred Bernese Mountain Dog from a reputable breeder affects the kind of experiences you will have with your dog throughout its lifetime. Conscientious breeders take great care to select breeding pairs that will have the greatest chance of producing dogs with good temperament, structure, health and character.

### BREEDER FOCUS

In this country and abroad there are breeders who are using dogs primarily as a way to turn a profit. A breeder, whose focus is profit, can cut corners in; caring for their own dogs, providing socialization for dogs and puppies, and often fail to conduct necessary genetic testing on breeding dogs to minimize producing pups with debilitating inherited traits. While monetary concerns are a part of any well run breeding program, the conscientious breeder is most concerned with the dogs and their welfare.



## **AVOID RESELLERS**

Currently there are DOG BROKERS importing dogs from poorer countries, particularly from Eastern Europe and Russia. Buying through a reseller makes it difficult or impossible for you to learn about the focus of the pup's breeder or the kinds of conditions under which puppies have been raised. Don't believe everything you are told by a DOG BROKER, who might tell you anything you wanted to hear to sell you a pup. The living conditions and health, soundness and temperament of the parents of your pup can have a significant effect on the well being of your dog throughout its entire life. Avoid buying your family's companion dog from a DOG BROKER. No reputable breeder, either in this country or abroad, would ever sell a well planned, well loved and taken care of pup into such an uncertain future.

## **CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES**

Championship titles in the backgrounds of parents can mean very little if the breeder has not adequately researched the families of dogs from which mated dogs are chosen. Adequate research on families of dogs requires a concentrated effort, study of pedigrees and an extensive understanding of traits possessed and passed on to offspring from dogs represented in pedigrees. AKC or other Conformation Championship titles are only a part of what makes up a quality dog or pedigree.

## **PUREBRED DOG REGISTRIES and AKC "LIMITED REGISTRATION"**

The following are several "puppy mill" registries.

- 1) FIC (federation of international canines)
- 2) CKC (continental kennel club)
- 3) APR (America's Pet Registry) the most popular of the puppy mill registries. These acronyms are remarkably similar to the legitimate registries, FCI (Federation Cynologique Internationale) and CKC (Canadian Kennel Club). It is possible that imported puppies will be touted to be registered with the FIC. PLEASE beware of these puppy mill registries. There are also backyard breeders breeding litters from parents that were sold on AKC "Limited Registration". Limited registration certificates are offered by the AKC to breeders to designate dogs as NOT of breeding quality. The AKC will not recognize puppies as AKC registerable out of Limited Registration parents.

Here are some things to watch out for:

Make sure you are getting a purebred BMD by requiring proof that the parents of your dog are AKC registered. If the dog is an IMPORT, please make sure it is registered with the AKC before you pay for it. If an imported dog is to be registered with the AKC, the importer must register the dog with AKC.



Check out breeders charging high prices and make sure you're getting more for your money than just a dog. DO NOT send money to anyone before seeing information about a pup's parents and learning about the seller's focus and reason for owning dogs. DO NOT send money before seeing a sales contract. Conscientious breeders use written sales contracts detailing both buyer's and seller's obligations and responsibilities involved in owning a dog from a responsibly conducted breeding program. Beware of breeders who don't ask questions and don't want to keep in touch with you and your pup. Good breeders care about dogs they sell and want to keep track of pups produced from their breeding program to better enable them to make sound breeding decisions that will affect future generations.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTRACTS

### PRICE

Presently in the United States there is a range of puppy prices from about \$1000 to \$1500+ per dog. This range reflects price differences between pet and show prospects, genetic testing done on breeding stock, titles earned...Please keep in mind that prices charged are not an indicator of quality.



### CLAUSES, TERMS and CONDITIONS

An experienced breeder uses a contract as a tool to clarify expectations of both the breeder and the buyer. Contracts may contain "spay/neuter" terms, guarantees for hereditary diseases and conditions that must be met before the dog is bred.- The responsibilities of both seller and buyer should be clearly spelled out should the pup NOT turn out as anticipated.

- Clauses may contain language that allows the breeder's right of first refusal" if for some unforeseen reason the puppy owner is unable to keep the puppy. The breeder may place the on an AKC "Limited Registration". ("Limited Registration" ) means that the dog may not be shown in AKC Conformation events, and any offspring may not be registered with the AKC. Dogs registered under AKC Limited Registration are eligible to compete in other AKC events such as Agility, Obedience trials and other working events. Should a pup turn out to be show quality and has not been spayed or neutered, only the breeder may change the Limited Registration to AKC Full registration.)



- Co-ownership occurs when two or more people jointly own a dog. Co-ownership contracts are typically between the breeder and the purchaser, but may involve an third party or parties. Co-ownership can take on many different forms and sometimes vague language may make understanding the legal meaning difficult. Co-ownership disputes are a source of daily complaints at AKC.

If you don't consider yourself a "contract savvy" person, ask someone you trust to review the contract with you. Careful review of any contract is strongly recommended, especially if this is your first AKC registered dog. Also consult the documentation provided by the AKC covering registration matters. In addition, so you have full knowledge of what a breeder should be responsible for supplying each puppy buyer, please review the Code of Ethics from the BMDCEW and the BMDCA.

- At the time of purchase, the breeder should sign the AKC registration application ("papers") over to you. Occasionally there is a problem with AKC not sending the AKC registration papers out in time and the breeder does not have them at the time of purchase. In this case you may ask to reserve part of your payment until the papers arrive.

A breeder cannot predict how a puppy will turn out as an adult with absolute certainty. A contract is beneficial to both parties and in the best interest of the puppy. Understand that you are committing yourself emotionally as well as financially to this puppy to make sure he or she receives the proper food and health care for life. Big dogs equal big bills. For routine health care, food and maintenance for a mature dog figure \$500 to \$700 per year if no problems develop. Of that amount, the annual vet visit with annual shots or titer tests, heartworm and stool tests and heartworm medication will be in the range of \$150 to \$250. Other examples of expenses should problems occur: surgery to repair a congenitally bad joint is at least several hundred dollars, emergency treatment for bloat and aftercare at a major vet hospital can be \$100 to \$2500. If you have questions concerning any terms and conditions in the contract, ASK the breeder. Discuss everything before taking your puppy home with you. Leave nothing unanswered!

Finally, please be honest with yourself and the breeder and make sure you can live within the Parameters of the contract, its terms and conditions. Remember these terms are important to the breeder and to the puppy.

**They should be terms you agree to completely.**



# The Standard

\*Working Group American Kennel Club Breed Standard\*

**General Appearance** The Bernese Mountain Dog is a striking tri-colored, large dog. He is sturdy and balanced. He is intelligent, strong and agile enough to do the draft and droving work for which he was used in the mountainous regions of his origin. Dogs appear masculine, while bitches are distinctly feminine.

**Size, Proportion, Substance** Measured at the withers, dogs are 25 to 27 inches; bitches are 23 to 26 inches. Though appearing square, Bernese Mountain Dogs are slightly longer in body than they are tall. Sturdy bone is of great importance. The body is full.

**Head** Expression is intelligent, animated and gentle. The eyes are dark brown and slightly oval in shape with close-fitting eyelids. Inverted or everted eyelids are serious faults. Blue eye color is a disqualification. The ears are medium sized, set high, triangular in shape. gently rounded at the tip, and hang close to the head when in repose. When the Bernese Mountain Dog is alert, the ears are brought forward and raised at the base; the top of the ear is level with the top of the skull. The skull is flat on top and broad, with a slight furrow and a well-defined, but not exaggerated stop. The muzzle is strong and straight. The nose is always black. The lips are clean and, as the Bernese Mountain Dog is a dry-mouthed breed, the flews are only slightly developed. The teeth meet in a scissors bite. An overshot or undershot bite is a serious fault. Dentition is complete.

**Neck, Topline, and Body**-The neck is strong, muscular and of medium length. The topline is level from the withers to the croup. The chest is deep and capacious with well-sprung, but not barrel-shaped, ribs and brisket reaching at least to the elbows. The back is broad and firm. The loin is strong. The croup is broad and smoothly rounded to the tail insertion. The tail is bushy. It should be carried low when in repose. An upward swirl is permissible when the dog is alert, but the tail may never curl or be carried over the back. The bones in the tail should feel straight and should reach to the hock joint or below. A kink in the tail is a fault.

**Forequarters** -The shoulders are moderately laid back, flat-lying, well-muscled and never loose. The legs are straight and strong and the elbows are well under the shoulder when the dog is standing. The pasterns slope very slightly. but are never weak. Dewclaws may be removed. The feet are round and compact with well-arched toes.





**Hindquarters** -The thighs are broad, strong and muscular The stifles are moderately bent and taper smoothly into the hocks. The hocks are well let down and straight as viewed from the rear. Dewclaws should be removed. Feet are compact and turn neither in nor out.

**Coat** -The coat is thick, moderately long and slightly wavy or straight. It has a bright natural sheen. Extremely curly or extremely dull-looking coats are undesirable. The Bernese Mountain Dog is shown in natural coat and undue trimming is to be discouraged.

**Color and Markings** -The Bernese Mountain Dog is tri-colored. The ground color is jet black. The markings are rich rust and clear white. Symmetry of markings is desired. Rust appears over each eye, on the cheeks reaching to at least the corner of the mouth, on each side of the chest, on all four legs, and under the tail. There is a white blaze and muzzle band. A white marking on the chest typically forms an inverted cross. The tip of the tail is white. White on the feet is desired but must not extend higher than the pasterns. Markings other than described are to be faulted in direct relationship to the extent of the deviation. White legs or a white collar are serious faults. Any ground color other than black is a disqualification.

**Gait** -The natural working gait of the Bernese Mountain Dog is a slow trot. However, in keeping with his use in draft and droving work, he is capable of speed and agility. There is good reach in front. Powerful drive from the rear is transmitted through a level back. There is no wasted action. Front and rear legs on each side follow through in the same plane. At increased speed, legs tend to converge toward the center line.

## Temperament

The temperament is self-confident, alert and good-natured, never sharp or shy. The Bernese Mountain Dog should stand steady, though may remain aloof to the attentions of strangers.

## Disqualifications

Blue eye color  
Any ground color other than black.

Approved February 10, 1990  
Effective March 28, 1990



## **BMD CLUB RESCUE & REHOME PROGRAMS**

The BMDCA and the BMD Regional Clubs maintain rescue programs. It is not commonplace for BMDs to be available through rescue, but rescue dogs are occasionally available. With the increasing popularity of the BMD, dogs in need of rehoming will continue to increase. Please contact a Regional Club's Rescue Chair (listed on Regional Club's websites) about rescue dogs' availability in specific areas of the country. There is also a rescue organization that removes dogs from precarious circumstances such as dog auctions, puppy mills and pet stores. BARC, Inc. at times has rescued dogs available for adoption as spayed or neutered companions. BARC can be found on the web at <http://www.barcinc.net/pages/1/index.htm>.

Club rescue programs provide experienced foster homes that are able to evaluate the needs and character of rescued dogs. Not all rescued/rehomed dogs and adoptive homes are well suited to each other. Rescuers, with the responsibility for choosing a home for a rescued dog from available adoptive families, base their final placement decisions on making an enduring and rewarding match between dog and owner. Please keep in mind there is a wide variety of reasons a dog may come to find itself in need of a new home, death of the owner, a change in living situation and an owner must place a much-loved pet that can no longer be kept, breeders often hold a puppy until they can determine its show and breeding potential or a bitch that has been bred once or twice may be retired, a BMD is lost and ends up far from home in a dog pound, scheduled to be euthanized after 10 days, but is taken into the rescue program. Often dogs coming into rescue can make simply wonderful companions for a new owner with a little patience and time for new owner and dog to acclimate to each other. Some rescue dogs may require different degrees of rehabilitation if the situation they have come from was not ideal. Always make sure you are well advised about the character and past of any dog you are bringing into your home, particularly if you have children.

### **CONSIDERING THE OLDER DOG**

If you are not prepared to go through the trials and training of a young puppy, an older puppy or mature dog can be a good alternative, especially in households where the family pet may have to spend much of the day unsupervised. Most BMDs are very adaptable, and a good tempered Bernese Mountain Dog of any age can become an enjoyable member of the family in the very short time. If the dog has been well cared for, it will continue to offer love and devotion to its new owners because a properly raised BMD loves and needs people. Do not hesitate to take an outgoing, good-natured BMD into your home. Although the dog may be confused at first and cause a few minor problems, patience, consistency and reassurance are the key. The dog's



self confidence will return and it will adapt readily to your routine.

**A few tips when adopting an older dog:** Learn all about the dog you are considering and determine if it will fit into your lifestyle - Learn about the dog's habits, diet and past history - if not available perhaps you could take the dog for a week for observation -Be sure that all family members meet the dog before it is adopted and all agree that this is the right decision –it's best to acquire the dog when you can be at home with the dog full-time for the first few days. This is so that the dog can learn what is expected of it, teach the dog where to relieve itself, when meals will be served, etc. Allow the dog a month or so to settle into its new environment before beginning formal obedience training. Even if the dog has had classes in the past, training is a good way to help you to understand the dog's responses and personality and for the two of you to become better friends.

### **FOOD and GROWTH**

Opinions of breeders differ greatly on what is the best food for a growing pup and dog and on which vitamin or mineral supplementation protocol to use. Your dog's breeder should recommend a diet for your dog. Your dog's breeder has experience in selecting a specific diet that has proven to meet the nutritional needs of dogs from their families of dogs. Veterinary advice on diet can be helpful; BUT, your dog's breeder is your best source for learning what kind of food will work best with your new pup and adult dog. The food you feed your dog can help or cause problems with ears, skin, overall health and behavior. BMD owners feed a range of food from raw diet, homemade diets to commercially prepared kibble. No matter what type of feed, BMD owners seem to agree to feed a high quality food with relatively low protein level, approximately 18 -26% and a moderate fat content, under 16%. The following - <http://www.doberdogs.com> is an informative website listing a number of commercially prepared dog foods, ingredients, website addresses, and contact information. The Whole Dog Journal at <http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/> prepares an annual listing of quality feeds.

Whether the feed is grain based or meat based, owners should search to find out what works best for their dog. Quantity will vary according to exercise and time of year. A young growing dog will eat more than an adult dog. Rely on your breeder for tips on managing puppy diet to optimize development. The most important thing is to monitor intake and make sure your dog does not get overweight. Some breeders and vets do not recommend puppy food, as they believe it encourages rapid growth that may be detrimental to the developing bone structure. Others believe in heavy addition of supplements. Read and consult with your veterinarian and breeder to make an informed decision.



## Growth

BMDs have a long growing period. Most BMDs do not finish their growth until they are 2 or 3 years old. BMDs continue to flesh out well into their middle years. BMD puppies can put on 2-3 pounds and up to ½ inch of vertical height a week during growth spurts occurring from 8-10 months of age. Often during BMD's growth phase dogs can appear gangly, high on leg or unbalanced and gawky. Gait can be substantially altered during growing phases and may become mildly uncoordinated. As long as the dog is not lame and does not develop orthopedic conditions such as hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia or osteochondritis dissecans (OCD), usually the gait will return to the gait exhibited by the dog as a young pup. It is not uncommon for BMD puppy's skeleton to grow unevenly and many BMDs gain height in their rear followed a few weeks later by the front growing to catch up. BMDs essentially reach their final height at between 18 months and two years. Environmental factors can also influence structural development. Please use common sense and do not take your puppy for long walks. Discourage leaping, jumping and running on ice and irregular terrain. Skid resistant rugs might be needed to eliminate slippery stairs and floors. Even those very active pups, willing to go 24 hours a day, need rest and quiet time. Managing growth through appropriate exercise and a quality diet will help to optimize the health and physical soundness of your dog. \*Some of the information in this section is from the BMDCNV Resource Guide "Food and Growth" section.

## **Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America (BMDCA) Website:**

***<http://www.bmdca.org/>***

The BMDCA was formed in 1968 to bring together BMD owners, breeders, and dogs throughout the country. The BMDCA grew slowly starting with 33 members. Currently the BMDCA membership stands at around 1200 making the BMDCA a well established organization. In 1981 the American Kennel Club (AKC) recognized the BMDCA as the breed's official parent club.

The major objectives of the BMDCA are:

- (a) to encourage and promote quality in the breeding of pure-bred Bernese Mountain Dogs (Berne Sennenhund) and to do all possible to bring their natural qualities to perfection;
- (b) to encourage the organization of independent local Bernese Mountain Dog Specialty Clubs where sufficient fanciers of the breed exist to meet American Kennel Club requirements;
- (c) to urge members and breeders to accept the standard of the breed as approved by the American Kennel Club as the only standard of excellence by which Bernese Mountain Dogs shall be judged;
- (d) to do all in its power to protect and advance the interests of the breed and encourage sportsmanlike conduct at dog shows, obedience trials, tracking tests, working/performance events and other club sponsored activities and club functions;



- (e) to conduct sanctioned matches, specialty shows and obedience trials under the American Kennel Club rules;
- (f) to promote events and activities which reflect the breed history and heritage;
- (g) to do all possible to improve the health of the breed;
- (h) to provide education appropriate to the needs of owners, breeders, judges, potential owners and all others with an interest in the breed;
- (i) to advocate honesty and integrity in all matters concerning Bernese Mountain Dogs.

To fulfill these objectives, the BMDCA produces publications, sponsors educational and other activities, maintains a code of ethics, sanctions a once a year national specialty dog show, and recognizes regional BMD clubs from around the country. Additionally, the BMDCA offers its own draft titles (cart pulling) thereby encouraging owners to maintain the natural working abilities of the breed. It unites fanciers in their common efforts and provides information for people interested in learning more about the breed. For more information, including the information stated above, please log on to [www.bmdca.org](http://www.bmdca.org).

## REGIONAL BMD CLUBS

Regional clubs are where most of the activities for BMDs and their owners happen. Our network of regional clubs located throughout the US, offers a wide variety of programs and services. Regional clubs and their members offer educational seminars, workshops and lectures by professionals, experts and long time dog caretakers. Topics cover such areas of interest as; training methods, canine behavior and management, health, genetics, holistic care, feeding, grooming, breeding and showing. Most Regional BMD Clubs host a minimum of 4-6 events a year where members and visitors participate in fun matches, or AKC sanctioned conformation, obedience and working events such as drafting and agility. Having a day of socializing and fun sharing the activities with your dogs make participation in a Regional Bernese Club something worth considering. (A listing of regional BMD clubs links is provided on another page.) As our earth increasingly becomes a global community and BMDs can be obtained from a variety of sources around the world, developing a basic understanding of breeders and dogs in other countries and from cultures is important should you decide to go outside US borders to obtain your BMD.

### **International Resources**

The Fédération Cynologique Internationale was created on May 22nd, 1911 with the aim to promote and protect cynology and purebred dogs by any means it considers necessary. FCI members can be reached through at following web address: <http://www.fci.be/members.asp?lang=en>



It is advisable to contact BMD clubs, protecting the best interests of the BMD in other counties prior to importing a dog. FCI affiliated clubs can provide you with information about BMD clubs and reputable breeders in their respective regions or countries. The North American BMD fanciers from the US and Canada, due to our close proximity, have enjoyed a longstanding association including an ongoing exchange of dogs and services. For information on Canadian breeders and clubs please visit the BMD of Canada at <http://www.bmdcc.ca/>

## LINKS

<http://www.bernergarde.org>

**Berner-Garde** disseminates information related to genetic traits in Bernese Mountain Dogs with the goal of helping breeders reduce genetic disease while breeding for good temperament and type.

<http://www.bmdca.org>

**The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America**

<http://www.bmdcc.ca/>

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Canada**

### Regional Clubs

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Nashoba Valley**

<http://www.bmdcnv.org>

Serves Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maine

**Finger Lakes Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

Serves New York

**Watchung Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.bmdcw.org>

Serves New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York

**Three Rivers Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://users.stargate.net/~lathrop/>

Serves West Virginia, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania

**Grand Canyon State Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.gcsbmdc.org/>

Serves Arizona, New Mexico

**North Coast Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Ohio**

[http://www.homestead.com/dollyn\\_mache/ncbmdco.html](http://www.homestead.com/dollyn_mache/ncbmdco.html)

Serves Ohio and Pennsylvania

**Mason Dixon Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.masondixonbmdc.org/>

Serves Maryland and Pennsylvania

**Chattahoochee Valley Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.cvbmdc.org/>

Serves Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana

Heart of Michigan Bernese Mountain Dog Club, Inc.

<http://www.hmbmdc.org/>

Serves Southern Michigan





**Heartland Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.hbmdc.org/>

Serves Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, Arkansas

<http://www.bmd.org/bmdcr.html>

Serves Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, Idaho

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Greater Seattle**

<http://www.bmdcgs.org/>

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Alaska**

<http://bmdcofak.freestarthost.com/>

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Northern California**

<http://www.norcalbernese.org/>

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Southern California**

<http://www.bmdcsc.org/>

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Northeastern Illinois**

<http://www.bmdcni.org/index.html>

**Inland Northwest Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.nwbernese.com/>

Serves Washington Oregon Idaho and Montana

**Pacific Northwest BMD Fanciers**

<http://www.pnwbmdf.org/>

Serves Oregon and Washington

**Lone Star Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://lonestarbernese.org/>

Serves Texas

**Sierra West Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.sierrawest.org/>

Serves Oakland, San Mateo, San Jose, and East Bay Area counties of Northern California

**Kentuckiana Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.kbmdc.com/>

Serves Kentucky, Indiana, southern Ohio and northern Tennessee

**Helderburg Bernese Mountain Dog Club of New York**

<http://www.helderberg-bmdc.org/>

Serves New York, Vermont, Massachusetts

**Potomac Valley Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.pvbmddc.org/index.html>

Serves Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Washington D.C.

**Bernese Mountain Dog Club of the Greater Twin Cities**

<http://www.twincitiesbmd.org/>

Serves Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota

**Three Rivers Bernese Mountain Dog Club**

<http://www.trbmddc.org/index.htm>

Serves western Pennsylvania

**BMD Home Page and the Berner-L** - mailing list, owner resources, health, breed/breeder information

<http://www.berner.org>



**PennHIP** This organization is a multifaceted radiographic technology (x-ray) for hip evaluation. The technique assesses the quality of the canine hip and quantitatively measures canine hip joint laxity.

<http://www.vet.upenn.edu/research/centers/pennhip/>

**(CERF)Canine Eye Registration Foundation**

<http://www.vmdb.org/cerf.html>

**AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB**

<http://akc.org>

**Westminster Kennel Club**

<http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org>

**OFA – Orthopedic Foundation for Animals**

<http://www.offa.org>

**Safety factor challenge** - an interactive website that teaches children how to safely interact with dogs

[http://www2.the-kennel-club.org.uk/safe\\_and\\_sound.html](http://www2.the-kennel-club.org.uk/safe_and_sound.html)

Site operated by Bernese Mountain Dog owners (some of whom breed Berners) for prospective puppy buyers. Berners have added a wonderful dimension to our lives, and we would like to help buyers decide if a "Berne" sounds right for you, and to point you towards some breeders of quality Berner puppies.

<http://BerneseBreeders.org>

**The Ins and Outs of Pedigree Analysis**

<http://www.siriusdog.com/bell.htm>

## BOOK LIST

### THE ALPENHORN

The official magazine of the BMDCA

The Alpenhorn , published six times a year by the BMDCA is a magazine containing articles on all aspects of the breed: showing, breeding, training, health issues, etc...It reports on club news, correspondence, recent titles earned, and club business. Subscription requests, renewals, and all address changes, including member changes (as well as member telephone and e-mail changes) contact : Roxanne Bortnick, 1922 Cherry Lane, Johnstown, CO 80534 ([bernese@warpdiveonline.com](mailto:bernese@warpdiveonline.com)). Subscriptions, \$35.00 per year. First-class mailing, add \$10.00 per year. Canadian and Mexican subscriptions, \$50.00 per year; overseas subscriptions, \$65.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions are payable in US funds (money order or cashier's check, NO personal checks).

Single issues of The Alpenhorn, when available, are \$7.00 each, postpaid. Depending on availability, missed copies will be replaced at \$2.00 each. Make checks payable to BMDCA.



## **BOOKS**

### **On the breed**

The Bernese Mountain Dog (Cochrane)

The Bernese Mountain Dog (Crawford)

Bernese Mountain Dog (Ostermiller)

The Beautiful Bernese Mountain Dog (Russ & Rogers)

The Complete Bernese Mountain Dog (Simonds)

The New Bernese Mountain Dog (Smith)

The Bernese Mountain Dog Today (Willis & Davenport)

### **On showing and breeding**

Born to Win (Craig Trotter)

Dog Eat Dog: A Very Human Book About Dogs and Dog Shows (Stern & Stern)

Junior Showmanship from Hand to Lead (Miller)

Show Me! A Dog Showing Primer (Coile)

The Winning Edge (Alston)

Canine Reproduction (Holst)

The Whelping and Rearing of Puppies (Lee)

Practical Genetics for Dog Breeders (Willis)

Control of Canine Genetic Diseases (Padgett D.V.M.)

### **Health**

Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats (Pitcairn and Pitcairn)

Pet First Aid (Mammato, DVM)

Taking Care of Your Dog (Gerstenfeld, DVM)

Holistic Guide to a Healthy Dog (Volhard and Brown)

Give Your Dog a Bone (Billinghurst)

### **Obedience Training/Behavior**

Canine Good Citizen (J. Volhard, W. Volhard)

Training Your Dog - The Step-by-Step Manual (Volhard & Fisher)

Best Foot Forward, Successful Obedience Handling (Handler)

Good Owners Great Dogs (Kilcommons, Wilson)

Positive Results (Pivar & Nelson)

Surviving Your Dog's Adolescence (Benjamin)

What All Good Dogs Should Know: The Sensible Way to Train (Volhard & Bartlett)

The Body Language and Emotion of Dogs (Milani DVM)

Dog Training in Ten Minutes (Benjamin)

Peak Performance (Zink DVM PhD)

### **Raising and Training Puppies**

The Art of Raising a Puppy (Monks of New Skete)

How to be Your Dog's Best Friend (Monks of New Skete)

Mother Knows Best: The Natural Way to Train Your Dog (Benjamin)

**\* Ask your pup's breeder about recommended training methods and for a specific recommendation before purchasing training books \***



## **BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG PUPPY SHOPPING LIST**

### **Things to buy for your puppy**

- ◆ Get a crate large enough to house an adult BMD. Your new puppy will grow very quickly so investment in a crate large enough to be used throughout your dog's life is best. A crate sized at around 36X 24 X 27 should be adequate for most BMDs.
- ◆ A 2-3 quart stainless steel food bowl
- ◆ A heavy ceramic or stainless steel 3-4 quart water bowl
- ◆ A six foot long training leash and a heavy duty flexi-lead
- ◆ A cloth buckle or break away collar (choke collars should only be used in training sessions and should never be left on an unattended puppy or adult
- ◆ Nail clippers or a nail grinder
- ◆ Quick stop in case you accidentally cut your puppy's nail too short A dental kit, a dog tooth brush and teeth cleaning paste A mild dog shampoo
- ◆ Toys and treats that are safe for puppies. (Puppies can eat cloth items or small toys and they can get their muzzles or heads stuck in small sized ring toys. Monitoring puppies with rawhide chews and cloth toys is a good idea.)
- ◆ The food your puppy will be eating for the first several weeks  
\*Your puppy's breeder should provide you with your puppy's nutrition requirements, including the brand of food your puppy has been eating along with recommendations for the amount and feeding schedule. Young puppies often eat 3 times a day which may be continued for several weeks after placement. Always rely on feeding recommendations from the breeder, who has, through observing development of their own dogs, chosen a diet that works best for their families of dogs.

### **THINGS TO HAVE WHEN PICKING UP YOUR PUPPY FROM THE BREEDER**

- ◆ Bring a crate with washable bedding or a bundle of shredded paper or newspapers
- ◆ Bring along safe toys for your puppy to play with on the journey to a new home.
- ◆ Bring water and an unbreakable water dish, and bring some food and an unbreakable food dish if the journey home is more than 8 hours.
- ◆ Bring an 8"-10" cloth buckled collar and a leash. (To be sure the collar will fit, ask your puppy's breeder what size collar will be suitable for your new pup or dog.
- ◆ Bring paper towel
- ◆ Paper towels and spray cleaner in case the puppy soils his crate.
- ◆ Bring treats.



**\*Please remember your puppy has been securely kept with his dam and litter mates since birth. The puppy may be a little scared and lonely for a few days until getting comfortable with a new environment, learning about what is expected and learning to trust you his new caretaker. Patience and tender hands will go a long way to building a rewarding relationship with your new puppy.\***



# BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG BREEDER ASSESSMENT

## TAKE NOTES

As you are continuing your search for a breeder and a puppy, it is a good idea to keep track of breeders you have contacted.

Where did you find the breeder?

- ◆ Internet (be careful!)
- ◆ through a Bernese club
- ◆ referred to breeder by a friend
- ◆ through a club or independent rescue program

When does each breeder you contact expect to have pups available?

Do you need to contact the breeder at a later date? When?

Have you received information from the breeder electronically or via snail mail?

This might include:

- ◆ a copy of the pedigree
- ◆ pictures of the parents of the puppy
- ◆ a copy of the contract
- ◆ copies of genetic testing certifications
- ◆ a copy of AKC registrations for the parents
- ◆ other supportive materials you might need that cover puppy care and raising

Have you made arrangements to visit the breeder's home? Know anyone who you trust who has been to the breeder's home and can attest to conditions there?

Have you made plans to meet breeders at a club event?

Breeders have different objectives in owning and producing puppies. At this time it is possible to obtain a Berner from a wide array of breeders. Please don't hit the panic button. It is not necessarily wise to get a dog from the first breeder you find with a puppy available. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the differences that exist in breeders' policies, their focus and reasons for owning and breeding Bernese. The manner in which breeders transact the business of breeding and selling pups will be important for you to consider. Be clear about breeder services offered before and after the sale. Realistically assess whether you are well matched with this breed, and a particular breeder's way of doing business. Feel confident that a puppy or dog from the breeder's breeding program has the traits you are looking for before you jump into Berner ownership.

**The responsibility for your satisfaction and your dog's happiness rests with you.**





Trust that if you are patient, have a caring home to offer, the resources to care for a Berner, and honestly talk with breeders about your expectations, you are more likely to end up with a dog that will be apt to work well in your situation and a breeder on whom you can rely and trust to assist you should you need help managing your dog.

The Bernese Mountain Dog Clubs and their members are devoted to providing these dogs and the people who keep them with information and education. We hope your experiences with the dog you obtain reflect the devoted and functional nature of the Bernese Mountain Dog.



