

Congratulations on your new Bernese puppy!

Bernese owners across the country welcome you to the joys of Bernese companionship. Friendship and helpful information are only a click away:
www.bmdca.org



Origins

Bernese Mountain Dogs (Bernese Sennenhund) are from Switzerland and named for the Canton of Bern. Historically, Bernese were used as general purpose farm dogs. Their large, sturdy frames and their calm, confident temperaments made them ideal for pulling carts to market, driving dairy cattle, watching the farm, and being farmers' companions.

General Appearance and Size

Bernese are striking, tri-colored, large dogs. They are intelligent, strong and agile enough to do the draft and driving work for which they were used. Measured at the withers, males should be 25 to 27 ½ inches and females 23 to 26 inches. Properly structured males generally weigh 90-120 pounds and females 75-105 pounds. Overweight should be avoided.

Temperament

The proper temperament of Bernese is confident, alert and good natured, never sharp or shy. With the training essential for ownership of any large working breed, Bernese are generally gentle, easygoing, and tolerant with children and other animals. As with any large dog, supervision is recommended with small children. Bernese prefer to be close to their people and activity, whether inside or out. If kept isolated, behavior problems such as barking or digging will likely develop. They may be aloof with strangers. Bernese should not be shy or aggressive. Temperament is inherited, but can be influenced, both positively and negatively, by environment, experiences, and training. If you experience temperament or behavior problems with your Bernese, please seek professional advice.

Socialization

As the puppy's owner, you play a critical role in providing a secure and stimulating environment to help the dog reach its full potential. The best approach is to be patient, kind, understanding, and positive. Read more about puppy development to ensure you are shaping a well-rounded dog. All Bernese should be exposed to a wide variety of people, places, and other animals, especially in their first year of life.

Training

A well-mannered dog is a pleasure and the owner's responsibility. Basic training is a necessity for all dogs and especially for large breeds such as the Bernese. A puppy kindergarten/socialization class between four and six months of age is recommended, followed by a basic obedience program before the dog reaches one. Positive training methods are recommended for this breed.

Puppy Exercise

Puppies need regular supervised exercise in a safe, *dog friendly* outside area to maintain healthy muscle tone and condition. Activities should be based on the puppy's physical condition and individual exercise capabilities. Exercise should never be forced (like jogging or extended rough playing). Avoid unsupervised exercise and play with older or larger dogs which could easily injure a puppy.

Bernese and Diet

There are many diet options. First ask your pup's breeder. Additional sources to help you decide what is best for you and your pup are other Bernese owners, either local or via internet discussion lists.

A low to moderate-protein diet will keep a growing Bernese's growth slow and steady. Rapid growth is not desirable as it places greater strain on immature muscles and tendons that must support a large boned pup. Adult Bernese are usually fed twice a day to reduce the chance of bloat. Avoid hard exercise immediately before or after meals.

Exercise

Bernese are farm dogs by heritage and need exercise to stay mentally and physically fit. Small fenced yards should be viewed as a place of convenience and safety but not as a place for adequate exercise for this moderately active breed. Plan a minimum of 30 minutes of moderately active exercise daily.

Grooming

Basic grooming should provide care for ears, nails, coat, and teeth. Bernese are a double-coated breed, and shedding is considerable. Regular brushing will help. A periodic bath and frequent brushing will maintain a neat appearance. Some people prefer to trim the feet and ears occasionally.

Versatility

Berners are a versatile breed. They participate in a wide range of activities, including conformation, obedience, carting, agility, tracking, herding, and therapy work. Of course, individual dogs will have their own preferences depending on their structure, character and temperament. Not every Berner will perform well in every event.



Longevity and Health Issues

The average life of a Berner is slightly more than seven years. Some individuals live to ten and beyond. BMD health issues include hip and elbow dysplasia, cancer, bloat, sub-aortic stenosis, autoimmune diseases, skin and coat problems, thyroid disorders, von Willebrand's disease, and eye disorders (ectropion and entropion, cataracts, PRA). The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America, Inc. (BMDCA) and its affiliate Berner-Garde strongly support ongoing health research. BMD owners are encouraged to report health information to the Berner-Garde open database and to use its vast databank: www.bernergarde.org

Many BMDCA members support health research for the Berner through the AKC Canine Health Foundation—a nonprofit charitable organization whose mission is to help dogs live longer, healthier lives. Supporting the Canine Health Foundation will help ensure a healthy future for all dogs. For more information about ongoing health research to help the Berner, see www.akcchf.org or call toll free 1-888-682-9696.

Spay/Neuter

Spaying or neutering your Berner is a sensible choice for most families. Altered dogs are usually calmer, easier to train, and less likely to wander. They are also less likely to develop several types of cancer. Ask your veterinarian to explain in more detail the benefits of spay/neuter.

Should I breed my Berner?

To breed is to contribute to the future of the Bernese Mountain Dog. Responsible breeders work hard to make that future a better one, one in which Bernese are healthier, sounder, and longer lived. Casual breeding, without extensive research and health screenings, often perpetuates problems. Breeding is time-consuming and often expensive and heartbreaking. The death of your bitch and/or puppies is always possible.

If your goal is to breed Bernese Mountain Dogs please take the time to thoroughly understand the breed, seek out mentors in the breed, and devote yourself to sound, healthy and long lives for the living creatures you bring into the world.

Identification

Protect your Berner in case it is lost. Identify your dog with a collar and tags. A permanent identification with a microchip or tattoo can be registered with AKC's Companion Animal Recovery. A 24-hour toll-free hotline helps locate the owners. There is a 100% re-homing rate with enrolled animals. For information, call (800) 252-7894.

For Your Reading Pleasure

The Alpenhorn is the official bi-monthly publication of the BMDCA. It includes articles on diverse topics of interest to the pet owner as well as those who engage in competition and breeding. BMDCA annual dues include a subscription. Non-members may subscribe for a fee. Details may be found at www.bmdca.org or from the Corresponding Secretary (address below).

Additional Resources

The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America, Inc. and its regional clubs are dedicated to protecting and advancing the well-being and interests of the breed. Providing information about the world of Bernese is one of the Club's primary purposes. Please take advantage of the resources and links you will find at our web site:

Regional BMD Club links—local resources, educational programs and social activities

BMDCA Info Series—practical bulletins on a wide range of topics: puppy care, health, training, grooming, etc.

BMDCA Breed Steward Program—connects you with owners and breeders who will take the time to lend a helping hand.

Enjoy your new Berner companion!

The BMDCA and regional BMD clubs are ready, friendly resources. If you have questions or need assistance, help is just a click away, or contact the BMDCA Corresponding Secretary at: PO Box 2675, Palatine, IL 60074-2675. We will put you in touch with experienced owners and responsible breeders who are dedicated to serving the breed.

