

BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG CLUB OF CANADA

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR BREEDERS

Introduction

1. Breeding of the Bernese Mountain Dog (BMD) should be undertaken with the intent to preserve the unique characteristics, temperament, and working ability of the breed. Every breeder should aim to reduce the incidence of heritable diseases through a process of screening and certification prior to any breeding. Breeders should be familiar with the CKC standards and to keep these standards in mind when selecting dogs for breeding. The following are general recommendations and guidelines for practice by breeders and reflect the goals of responsible quality breeding and preservation of correct breed type.

General Statements

2. The breeder shall first and foremost consider the well-being of all Bernese Mountain Dogs used for breeding. Dogs and bitches used for breeding must be in good health and physical condition.
3. Any decisions to breed should be grounded in a thorough knowledge of the pedigrees of the intended breeding pair, including information pertaining to siblings and offspring, as well as ancestors (i.e., both horizontal and vertical pedigree knowledge).
4. It is important to consider all of the elements of health, longevity, conformation, and temperament when making breeding selections. Those with compromised health, that are shy or aggressive, those with disqualifying traits, or significant deviations from the standard should not be used in a breeding program.
5. New breeders should: become familiar with the history of the breed, the founding FCI standard, and the CKC standard; seek out a mentor; observe many examples of Bernese Mountain Dogs, and consult with other breeders in order to gain a strong impression of what is considered ideal type, character, and conformation for the breed.
6. All breeders should strive to understand the principles of genetics and reproduction.
7. All puppies born in Canada must be registered with the CKC. Any foreign BMD used must be registered with a national kennel club recognized by the Canadian Kennel Club. In Canada, the CKC requires permanent identification by microchipping or tattooing of all registered dogs.
8. Prior to breeding, the dog/bitch should be evaluated by more than one qualified person and exhibited in licensed conformation events. Ideally, BMDs used in a breeding programme will obtain a CKC championship and a working title, demonstrating some conformity with the standard and a degree of trainability and correct temperament.

Health Screening

9. A number of canine genetic disorders have been documented as affecting Bernese Mountain Dogs and testing is available for several of these conditions. All BMDs should be screened for hip and elbow dysplasia, and eye disorders. In addition, the BMDCC strongly recommends that all potential breeding dogs be screened for the presence of shoulder osteochondrosis dessicans (OCD), hypothyroidism, heart disease (particularly sub-aortic stenosis (SAS)), and von Willebrand disease. [Testing should be complete prior to breeding in order to allow the breeder to properly assess the health and suitability of the dog, and to facilitate an educated selection of a compatible mate.]

10. Hips and elbows should be x-rayed, then evaluated and certified by a recognized veterinary college or the Orthopaedic Foundation of America (OFA)). An additional tool for evaluating hips is the PennHip system which measures joint laxity. A dog may be preliminary screened prior to 18 months of age for hip and elbow dysplasia, but should be re-evaluated after reaching the age at which the institution will issue a certification.

11. Ideally, BMDs used for breeding will be certified to have normal elbows and hips free of dysplasia with a rating that exceeds the minimum level.

12. Eyes should be screened by a qualified veterinary ophthalmologist after the age of 12 months and re-examined annually, and have the results registered with the Canine Eye Registry Foundation (CERF). Those with noted heritable conditions should not be bred.

13. A responsible breeder will fully disclose to the owner of potential mates the existence of significant medical conditions in the pedigree or offspring. These could include orthopaedic problems, eye abnormalities, thyroid conditions, heart disease, seizure disorders, liver shunts, cancers, and behavioural disorders.

Responsibilities of Stud Dog Owners

14. Owners of stud dogs shall not accept bitches for service who cannot be maintained in a safe and healthy environment.

15. Stud dog owners should ensure that the owner of any bitch they accept for service is knowledgeable enough and has the ability and willingness to properly care for and place the puppies.

16. A dog should not be used at stud before twelve months of age, and only on a very limited basis until he is two years old and has completed health certifications/evaluations.

17. Before repeating a breeding, breeders should wait at least 18 months so that the overall health and quality of the first litter can be assessed in order to prevent the perpetuation of any serious heritable problems.

18. Stud dog owners share a responsibility for litters produced and should make a reasonable effort to keep track of and share information related to the health and progress of all progeny.

19. A contractual agreement should be in place for all breeding. The CKC requires that stud dog owners maintain records of all breedings.

Responsibilities of Brood Bitch Owners

20. Breeders must carefully weigh the many considerations with respect to age, interval and frequency of breeding, against the best interest of the bitch and the impact upon the breed.

21. After each litter, the breeder should assess the breeding, pregnancy, whelping and mothering instinct exhibited by the bitch before breeding her again.

22. Breeders shall maintain a clean, healthy environment for whelping and have ready access to veterinary care for bitches and their whelp. Bitches should never be left alone when whelping.

23. Breeders shall keep accurate records of all breedings, contracts and puppies produced. All offspring must be registered with the CKC.

24. Breeders shall maintain a clean and healthy environment for all puppies in their care. Puppies shall be given a quality diet, routine veterinary examinations and required care, appropriate socialization, and adequate intellectual and physical stimulation.

25. Breeders are committed to the lifelong wellbeing of all puppies produced.

26. Puppy buyers shall be carefully screened to ensure appropriate and successful placement. Breeders must furthermore agree to take puppies back or assist in rehoming, when necessary, regardless of the age or health of the dog.

27. Potential owners shall be informed of any existing or potential health problems, areas of conformational strengths and weakness, temperament and activity levels of their puppy.

28. A breeder shall enter into a written contractual agreement with all puppy buyers which outlines the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

29. Breeders should ensure that each puppy buyer receives a signed BMDCC membership application, and information about the Club.

30. Puppies should not go to their new homes prior to 7 weeks of age.

31. All intact dogs placed in Canada are to be sold with a CKC non-breeding agreement or co-owned. The non-breeding agreement may be cancelled when the breeders contractual requirements are met or by mutual consent for AKC event entry.

32. Breeders should educate puppy buyers about:

- potential health problems,
- heritable problems that may arise,
- spay and neuter recommendations
- feeding and nutritional requirements across the lifespan,
- behaviour and training,
- socialization,
- responsible ownership,
- appropriate veterinary care, and
- grooming.

33. Breeders shall never sell puppies through pet shops or known puppy brokers, or allow the sale of their puppies through auctions or charitable events.

Advertising

34. Breeders shall honestly represent their Bernese (health certifications, titles, etc.) in any advertisements or websites.