



BMDCGTC *Education Series*

A Breeder's View Of The Search For A Puppy

When the time comes to begin your search for a new puppy, you undoubtedly will browse the internet and read countless articles on the breed you are interested in. You may even research a couple of breeders. Good for you!

For each breed, there is a national parent club and also regional clubs that can help get you started on your search. Within each of the breed clubs there is a national breeder referral as well as regional referral chairs that will know which reputable breeders in their area are expecting or currently have litters. Typically these breeders follow the guidelines established by the clubs for ethical breeding practices. These guidelines will include health testing and behavior guidelines that are meant to help ensure that the best qualities of the breed are passed on to the puppies.

Once you have decided on a couple of breeders that you're interested in, set up a person to person interview to meet each breeder, see her dogs, where the pups will live and where the big dogs live. Arriving promptly at the prescheduled time, you will want to come armed with a list of question to ask the breeder about their dogs, their puppy philosophy, health certifications and so on.

The breeder will have a list of questions for you as well! *What?* That's right, this is a working relationship and both you and the breeder need to know as much about each other as possible in order to ensure each pup is placed with the right family. This also gives the breeder an idea of where you may need further education. Responsible breeders will always be happy to point you towards additional educational materials and opportunities so you can better prepared to bring a puppy into your family.

It is important to answer the breeders' questions honestly, and not tell them what you think they want to hear. The objective is to find a puppy that is best suited to you and your lifestyle. If you are unsure of something be open about this. Your breeder is a valuable resource person and can be your "go to person" for the life of the puppy.

Following are some important items that I would have a prospective family consider:

For more information, please visit our website at www.twincitiesbmd.org

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Time Commitment:

Raising a puppy is like having a toddler in the house.

Long nights, constant movement, messes, accidents and not being able to sit at the end of a long work day are a reality with a puppy in the house. You would have to ask yourself if the idea of this is nightmarish, or if this is something you (and your family) can put up with for a couple years.

Dog training classes, usually beginning at 11 weeks, consist of 8 weeks of puppy kindergarten, followed by at least one 8 week course of basic obedience. This generally is a couple hours commitment a week, with practice daily for short training sessions. Training is a must do activity as that darling little puppy you bring home may outweigh a small child by 6 months of age. An untrained teenage puppy is not a pretty thing. Depending on the needs of your puppy and activities you would like to do together there will also be the possibility of advanced levels of training in obedience or specialized training such as agility or drafting.

If you have children in the home do not consider them to be reliable caretakers, or use a puppy to teach kids responsibility. It is unfair to the puppy that will need consistent care, nurturing and training. Children are a vital part of this, but consider your own time restraints and whether a puppy would fit into that.

Intention And Reason For Getting A Dog:

What made you choose the Bernese Mountain Dog over the other breeds?

A Bernese is an intelligent dog bred to pull carts, herd livestock, and has mild guarding instincts. This is not a protection dog. A Bernese will pull, pull, pull that leash, unless taught not to, and may very well herd a small flock of children. Think of the breed traits and put that into your lifestyle. Size does matter! A puppy usually leaves the breeder around 16 Pounds but by 6 months it will weigh between 60-80 pounds, while an adult will be between 90-110 pounds. This is not a breed you will be carrying around even though it will still think it can fit on your lap or under a table, until it stands up. At first it may seem fun and silly, but when your furniture is moved *every time* the dog moves through the house it may be trying for your patience.

Money; Financial Commitment:

Owning a dog is a considerable financial commitment.

A purebred Bernese Mountain Dog will cost between \$1200-\$2000. The average care for one dog, which includes food, supplies, and basic medical care, averages \$1000-\$1,500 a year. Emergency care can range from \$250 to \$5,000. Is this financial commitment one you can honestly make?

Regardless of how careful a breeder was in her breeding decisions, problems do arise and you will have to ask yourself if you have the resources to give your companion good veterinary care. Lyme's Disease, orthopedic problems or eating a sock/toy all add up quickly due to x-rays, blood work, surgery and medication. Trips to an Emergency Clinic for accidents and injuries that occur after your Veterinarian's normal office hours may also be required.

Dog training classes generally run \$100 for a 6-8 week class. It is highly recommended that everyone attend at least one course with their puppy. Some Bernese require periodic refresher courses.

And, if you value a pristine lawn and gardens do not get a dog. Period. The money you would spend to repair shredded gardens, hole filled lawns and urine burn marks is mind boggling.

Environment:

Do you have the space for a large dog?

Puppies younger than one year of age need free play, not walks, for exercise. If your yard is not fenced, how can you keep the pup secure? Shade is essential. Double coated, black dogs overheat incredibly fast. On a beautiful 70 degree day your dog will be seeking a cool place even if it means digging a hole to China to find it.

Inside space is another consideration for day and night care. You will need to close off a small area inside for the pup during the first 5 months while it's being potty trained. Once the pup is dependable, around 8-10 months, you will need a space where he can be when you are running errands.

An inside crate is important for when you can't have your eyes 100% on the dog such as when you answer the phone, make dinner or help a child with homework. This is also a safe place to keep the pup during the night and when you have to step out. Pups eat virtually EVERYTHING, hence the large medical bills. A pup is any dog under the age of 2 by the way.

A puppy buyer also needs to consider where the pup will be when they are at work. Pups can hold their bodily functions for as many months as they are old plus one. So a 2 month old pup needs to relieve itself every 3 hours, day or night. A 5 month old every 6 hours and so on.

Many folks feel that a puppy can attend puppy daycare while they are at work. This is a horrible idea. So many injuries occur during the first year of life due to rough housing. A Bernese pups growth plates do not close until 1 year of age so injury before that age can have a dramatic and lifelong effect on a pup.

Owning a dog is a LIFETIME commitment! Animals develop deep bonds with you and your family. Any change in ownership can be extremely traumatic, so you should be prepared for the responsibility involved in dog ownership. Dog owners need to be able to provide shelter, food, water, [medical care](#), love and attention for the life of their dog.

