

ThornCreek Bernese

www.thorncreekbmds.org

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The First Night

I recommend crating your puppy at night. Remove all collars before putting the puppy in the crate. The crate should be large enough for him to spread out and stand up but not so large that he would have a place to do his business away from where he sleeps/eats. Place a soft crate mat in the crate and the towel with our scents on it (remove this towel when he no longer cries at night). There are two strategies one can use for overnight. The first strategy consists of removing his water bowl from his crate about an hour before you go to bed. Make sure that puppy has had ample water during the day and upon rising the next morning, immediately give him water. According to my veterinarian there is no harm to the puppy in doing this as long as puppy has had ample water during the day. An alternative strategy is to clip a water bucket to the side of the crate (you have one in your puppy survival kit). Fill it with crushed ice, then barely cover the ice with water. That will keep him hydrated at night and also allow you to get a little sleep. You will need to take him out whenever he

rustles—plan on not getting a good night's sleep until you develop a routine. I set my alarm to take some control over establishing a routine. The first night, you will probably be taking him out 1-3 times to avoid having him do his duty in his crate (a habit that is very hard to break if it is allowed to take

hold). Follow the advice below on housebreaking. You do not want to allow him to do his duty in the crate, so whenever he wakes up take him out. I also put one safe toy in the crate. He is teething so his mouth is sore. Do not give him a frozen wet washcloth, as recommended by some people, unless you want him to chew on your towels and clothes, a dangerous habit, when he is an adult! Kongs thrown in the freezer can help. Put a tiny bit of peanut butter inside before you freeze it. Kongs can be washed in the dishwasher.

During the day, you will need to supervise the puppy as you would

any toddler. They do all the things toddlers do—everything goes in the mouth and they are attracted to dangerous places and stairs. Be especially careful of electrical cords and sugarless candies/gums. A good place for a puppy is in a kitchen with you—set up baby gates or a small x-pen. I also have an eyebolt screwed unobtrusively into the base board of my kitchen cupboard where I clip a lead to it and attach the lead to a halter on the puppy. You will still need to supervise but it allows the puppy a little freedom. Be aware that puppies chew leads (especially leather ones) so always watch. If you cannot watch puppy, put him in his crate with a toy and water. He should not be kept in a crate all day or he will not develop properly, mentally or physically. I set the alarm on my oven or computer to remind me. I always feed my puppies in their crate to make them associate good things with the crate. You will need to take him out regularly to do his business (after eating, after napping, and after play).

Before your puppy is fully immunized (e.g., at least 7 days after he has had his

Provided that the puppy has had ample food and water during the day, you can remove food and water from his crate an hour before you go to bed. Be sure to give him both food and water when you get up in the morning.



last vaccination), do not take your puppy to pet stores, pet parks, roadside stops, parks, shopping centers or other public areas where dogs of unknown health and vaccination status may frequent. If you go into any of these places, before coming into your home, spray your shoes with a 5% bleach solution. Do not allow your puppy to play with dogs that have not been fully immunized (except in a controlled puppy

class at your veterinarian's office or one recommended by your veterinarian for puppies not fully inoculated).

Food & Feeding

Puppies should be fed three times a day and given easy access to fresh water for the entire day. According to a Purdue study (Glickman, et al.) on the causes of bloat/twisting of the stomach (a problem in Bernese), there are things that you can do to minimize its risk. Place the food bowl on the floor (no raised feeding as in the old days). Puppies should eat three meals a day/adults should eat a minimum of two meals a day (no huge meals). Puppies/dogs should not exercise the hour before the meal or two hours after the meal. Foods containing citric acid were found to be associated with increased levels of bloat, so you should avoid those. Bloat is fatal if not recognized early and corrected (within the first 6-7 hours), so this routine should be adhered to for your dog's entire life.

Large-breed puppies tend to grow faster than their skeletal structure can support. As such, we want to control rapid weight gain. This provides the frame time to develop its full strength before weight is placed on it. Puppies who become too heavy too fast can experience orthopedic problems on an otherwise healthy skeleton. To control for rapid weight gain,

we feed puppies a specially-formulated large-breed puppy food for the first 9 to 12 months. Generally large-breed puppy foods have less protein, calcium and phosphorus than adult foods.

These puppies have been weaned to Fromm Family Gold Large-Breed Puppy food, which I buy/order at my local Agway Store. Agway's prices are considerably cheaper than those of major pet store chains. Ask if they will order it for you. Most will. If you buy a large bag (the most economical way to buy dog food), get a food-safe, air-tight container. The ones that roll on wheels are very convenient as they can easily be stored in a pantry or under counter. Equip it with a 1-C dry measuring cup. Always measure your dog's food. Don't eyeball it. If you don't measure, you will always overfill the bowl and your dog will become fat. Knowing how much to reduce the ration to bring him back into condition will be difficult since you didn't measure in the first place. For your dog's sake, measure his food and watch his weight.

In general, free feeding (leaving a bowl of food out all day) doesn't work well for this breed. They tend to eat too much at one time, and as we discussed that tends to increase the risk of bloat. Place the ration on the floor and give him 10 minutes to eat. If he does not begin to eat, pick up the bowl. You don't want to teach your dog to be a picky eater. If you feed your dog at the same time every day, he will tend to do the big business right afterward. This is useful in housetraining.

Remember that treats are food calories, so figure that into his daily intake. If I am going to do obedience work with the puppy during the day, I will take out some kibble from his daily ration and use it as a treat. On occasion, I may steam carrot coins cut in small pieces, which adds a little fiber to the diet and very few calories.

Transitioning to a new food few requires at least 4 days. On the first day, subtract $\frac{1}{4}$ of the old food and replace it with the $\frac{1}{4}$ new food. The second day, subtract $\frac{1}{2}$ of the old food and replace the half with the new food. The third day, subtract $\frac{3}{4}$ of the old food and replace it with $\frac{3}{4}$ of the new. On the last day, your pup should be able to handle the new food. I will provide you with enough food to transition the dog (5 days).

Do not feed table scraps to your dog. Do not let your dog beg at the table. The way

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you teach him table manners is by never feeding him food from the table.

I use stainless steel bowls for food and stainless steel buckets for water. They can be washed in the dishwasher (wash them daily), and unlike plastic bowls they have not been associated with “snow nose”. These might be a bit hard to find in the average pet store but they are readily available online from PetEdge at www.petedge.com. Your Welcome Home Puppy bags will contain these to get you started.

There are many good dog foods for large breed adult dogs now. I have used California Natural, Van Patten, and Kirkland Large Breed. I currently use Fromm Family Adult Gold for my adults. In general, you want to avoid the foods that are sold in grocery stores and discount stores – there is a reason why they are cheaper. If you need advice, *The Whole Dog Journal* frequently does a review of dry, wet, and raw foods at various times of the year.

House Training

The simple truth is that puppies have tiny tanks, so they need to go out a lot more frequently than a grown dog. They are also developing control of their bladder. In the initial training period (during the day), I would take my puppy out every 30 minutes. In addition, take your puppy out after he wakes from a nap, after he eats, and after he plays. He has been “trained” to a training pad, but there is additional work that must be done to teach him to tell you when he needs to go outside. Place the pad near the door that you plan to use. Make sure that puppy sees and knows where this pad is located. When he walks over to the pad, whisk him up and take him out to the spot where you want him to defecate/urinate. Adopt a cue word for going to the potty—we use “tee tee” or “hurry up”. When you take puppy out, go to the same spot in your yard—away from where he plays. Say the cue word, and if he goes immediately, praise him profusely. If he doesn’t go, swoop him up in your arms and take him back in. Wait 5 minutes and repeat. You want to teach him that when that door opens, he is to go out and do his business (not dawdle around). After he has mastered going to the door when he must go to the potty, move the pad outside (still taking him to his spot in the yard). Finally, remove the pad. See article on potty training in *The Alpenhorn*.

I may be helpful to clicker train him to go to the door (see article on clicker training in *The Alpenhorn*).

You can also use a crate to train puppies, but just be sure that you do not leave puppy in there all day. With very young puppies you may need to get up two or three times in the night at first until their capacity to hold it is greater. Never deny your puppy fresh water. I set my alarm and get them up at the same time every night (unless I hear rustling in the crate). Puppies can sometimes develop diarrhea. This can be serious in small animals or children because of the risk of dehydration. Often a tablespoon of plain pumpkin (not prepared pumpkin pie filling) can add enough fiber to firm things up. An easy way to have pumpkin on hand when you need it is to spoon out tablespoon-sized amounts of pumpkin on a cookie sheet and freeze them. When the pumpkin blobs are frozen, individually wrap them and put them back in the freezer until you need one. Let thaw before use. If your puppy has diarrhea for more than a day, take him to the vet. Diarrhea in older (more than a year old) dogs can often be treated with fasting for 12 hours (provide plenty of water), the giving the dog a combination of boiled chicken and white rice for three days. If that does not work, take the dog to the veterinarian. Do not do this with a young puppy. Three days of diarrhea and accompanying dehydration is dangerous for a young puppy.

Finally, rubbing a puppy’s nose in his feces or urine is forbidden. It does not house-break the puppy. It does teach him to fear you.

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Bente and Kilo at 1 year.





When Accidents Happen

If an accident happens, it is important that you clean it up immediately and eliminate the odor with either an enzymatic product or white vinegar. There are numerous enzymatic products on the market that can do this effectively (e.g., Simple Solution, Nature's Miracle). The spray bottles work best. If you run out of these, a mild solution of New Dawn and white vinegar will also work. If you discover a stain on your carpet, hydrogen peroxide in a spray bottle can effectively remove most biological stains (blood, urine, etc.).

Spray it on, put a cloth over it to allow it to work. Apply again if some stain still remains. You will need to test the rug first to make sure the peroxide mixture will not damage the dyes in the rug (if they are organic). This is a well-known trick that physicians have often used when a bloody nose threatened to stain the office carpet.

A final note, do not use ammonia-based products on your floors—it smells like urine to your dog. Use an ammonia-free and pine-free cleaner. Lock them away in a closet when they are not being used.

Health and Immunity

In your puppy packet, you will find a set of laminated "health guide cards" to guide you in caring for your dog in emergencies.

Vaccinations

There is nothing more controversial in the dog world than the issue of vaccinations. Let's be clear: I am a believer in vaccinations when they are applied conservatively and spread out over a period of time. The vaccination schedule that my veterinarian, who is also a Berner owner and breeder, recommends for your puppy is given below. It is important that you follow this schedule. Your puppy will NOT have sufficient immunity until he has finished ALL of his vaccinations, so please do not take him to public areas or let him play with dogs that you do not know are current on their vaccinations until then. Be careful of dogs whose owners who do not believe in vaccination and do

not vaccinate. Administration of a rabies vaccination every three years after the initial inoculation and booster is the law—for good reason.

With puppies, we wait until the maternal immunity has declined such that vaccinations (DHPP) will be effective. If we administer the vaccine before the maternal immunity is low, the vaccine will have no effect. On the other hand, a low maternal immunity puts the puppy at risk of catching the disease. Make no mistake: distemper and parvo virus (which are ubiquitous) kill puppies or if they survive (as in the case of Parvo virus), they suffer irreparable neurologic damage. [I have photos of a case that I documented for BARC and the USDA of 14 mill puppies who were not properly immunized, caught Parvo, and were eventually euthanized because of Parvo-related seizures. Once you see the suffering, you are convinced of the need for carefully following the vaccine protocols.]

Judging when maternal immunity is low is not a precise calculation, so veterinarians and breeders try to wait until as long as they can to administer the first vaccine in the series without endangering the puppy. Clearly, we are managing risk. For that reason, we administer several vaccines to make sure that your puppy achieves proper immunity. Your puppy will come to you with his first Distemper-Hepatitis-Parvo-Parainfluenza (DHPP) vaccination (Merial brand) administered at 8 weeks of age. No puppy in the litter suffered any reaction with this (Merial) vaccination. Within 3 weeks (not 2 weeks and not 4 weeks, but 3 weeks) you will need to have your veterinarian administer the 2 in the series of DHPP. In the old days we administered "combo shots," but research indicates that spacing them out is healthier for the puppy. I do not administer the Lyme vaccine (I religiously use flea/tick control), and I only administer Bordatella (Kennel Cough) prior to boarding.

The Alpenhorn magazine that is enclosed in your packet contains a good article discussing canine vaccines. Below is the schedule for your puppy's "core vaccines," as recommended by my veterinarian, Lawrence Gerson, VMD, Point Breeze Veterinary Clinic, 412-665-1810.

- 8 Weeks—DHPP (Merial) —February 28, 2011 (This 8-week shot has already been given)
- 11 Weeks—DHPP—March 21, 2011

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- 14 Weeks—DHPP—April 11, 2011
- 17 Weeks—Parvo & Rabies—May 2, 2011

Lepto is a “non-core” vaccine, but it is recommended if your dog lives near woods, park, bodies of water, etc. or anywhere raccoons or rodents may urinate, etc.). One of our puppy buyers is an infectious diseases specialist, and he has informed me that they have diagnosed several cases of Leptospirosis in humans. My dogs get a Lepto vaccine.

- 20 Weeks—Lepto—May 23, 2011
- 23 Weeks—Lepto—June 13, 2011

Once your puppy has had all his puppy shots, he will need to be boosted the following year. After that, vaccinate every three years. You can obtain a 3-year rabies vaccine. Ask your vet to use it after the initial vaccines and boosters are completed.

Worming/Flea Control

Your puppy has been wormed three times before you pick him up. His last worming was on February 28th. We recommend another worming in two weeks once after he arrives at your home (the week of February 14th). You will need to administer monthly a heartworm preventive to keep your dog healthy for his entire life. It is far easier to prevent heartworm than to eradicate it after a dog has contracted heartworm. As one vet explained to me, “When your dog has heartworm, we try to kill the heartworms before we kill your dog.” I administer Interceptor once a month to all my dogs, along with their Vectra-D Flea/Tick Control. Interceptor has the benefit of being a general wormer (excluding tape worms) for round worm, hook worm, and whip worm. For flea control, I use Vectra-D. In the Western PA region, Fipronil, the active ingredient in Frontline, as not been protecting as well against ticks as it did in the past.

Risk of Orthopedic Injury to Healthy Joints

With large breed puppies and dogs, orthopedic health is always a concern. Your puppy has been born of parents who tested clear for both hip and elbow dysplasia. Since these orthopedic diseases are inherited polygenically (through many genes), there is no guarantee that your puppy will be dysplasia free. What your breeder does when she selects dysplasia-free parents is stack the odds in your puppy’s favor that he will

be dysplasia free—but it does not guarantee healthy elbows and hips. Even if your puppy starts out with healthy elbows and hips, you can destroy them by allowing rough play with dogs or children, jumping off ledges or out of cars, running up and down stairs, or other similar joint-damaging activities while he is under 6 months of age. The risk of orthopedic damage from physical trauma is particularly high between the ages of 4th to 6th, months when the puppy’s weight tends to be more than what the orthopedics can withstand when play is rough or there is jumping. Just as you would not let a human toddler play on stairs, run too fast and too long, jump off a high wall, or play in the middle of a scrimmage with human teenagers, don’t let your puppy play on stairs, run excessively, jump, or frolic in the middle of rough-housing adult dogs. Such play can seriously and permanently damage otherwise healthy puppy hips and elbows. If you have children, be careful that they do not over-stress the puppy’s skeletal frame.

Leash walking and playing with other puppies of similar size and age are good ways to get safe exercise. These dogs are not meant to jog at your side or trail along as you ride your bike. If you wish to do that, get a second dog that is not a Berner.

Chewing on Bones and Rawhides

I’ve learned the hard way on this one. Bones (or antlers, the current fad) can easily break teeth, and the last time I had a dog’s tooth repaired because of a bone, it cost me over \$500 (yes, dogs do get restorative dentistry!). I also have had a dog break a tooth from chewing on Nylabones. Do not give bleached bones (they splinter) or any bone that the dog can get between his rear molars, because they can easily crack the molar. I will admit that there is nothing like

If you feed a healthy kibble diet, your dog’s teeth should do well. Once a week you can give him a bit of enzymatic doggie toothpaste on a finger brush.



Elmiras Fleur de Lys at 8 years old.

Puppies are notorious for eating all sorts of things—underwear, socks, plastic bags, string, pantyhose. These objects can block the intestine or cut off blood circulation to the intestine, causing it to die.

a bone to clean teeth, but anything other than a huge round knuckle bone that the dog cannot get in his mouth around while you supervise is risky. If you feed a healthy kibble diet, your dog's teeth should do well. Once a week you can give him a bit of enzymatic doggie toothpaste on a finger brush (I will give you a finger brush in your puppy package). Doggie toothpaste is available at most pet stores, online pet catalogs, or your vet's office. **NEVER USE HUMAN TOOTH PASTE ON YOUR DOG!**

For a different set of reasons do not feed your dog rawhide. The rawhide is easily swallowed and can cause life-threatening intestinal blockages

Things around the House that are Dangerous

There are many things in your house that could kill your puppy. Make sure all family members pick up their underwear! Pantyhose and plastic bags are also dangerous to GI tracts. If you carry sugarless mints and gum in your purse, don't leave your purse where puppy can get it. More than a few dogs have died from these candies (Xylitol). Be careful around holidays (Easter, Halloween and Christmas/Hanukkah/Kwanza), when there is more candy around and guests who many not realize the danger to your pets. Be careful bringing home groceries. More dogs than you can imagine died from eating a box of raisins, grapes, onions, or baking chocolate straight out of a grocery bag that was carried into the kitchen but not yet unpacked or left in the car with an uncrated dog. Make sure that your garage

Bente at 8 weeks



floor is clean and has no dripping from antifreeze (sweet and highly lethal). Many cleansers are toxic if consumed (bleach) or if footpads come in contact with a floor cleaned by them (pine-based cleansers). Many houseplants are poisonous—e.g., Sago Palms sold in many Big Box stores. These are cautions that you should respect for your dog's entire life. Puppies add an additional dimension—in general, treat them like a human toddler. Just pick up everything that they might eat—which is just about everything, especially when they are teething (now until about 7 months old).

Risk of Intestinal blockage

Puppies are notorious for eating all sorts of things – underwear, socks, plastic bags, string, pantyhose. These objects can block the intestine or cut off blood circulation to the intestine, causing it to die. When a puppy is suspected of swallowing an object, do not wait. Get him to the vet right away for an x-ray. Often, removal of these objects requires surgery and resection of the intestine (removing a length of intestine). If you do not act soon enough, it can mean death for your puppy. As an aside, many dog toys sold on the market are not safe for dogs. Avoid toys with batteries (they often make funny animal sounds) or those with parts that easily pull off and can be swallowed. Traditional Kongs are usually safe, although the ones covered with cloth having “tails”, can be swallowed. Some dogs can play with a toy forever without chewing it up. Other dogs can finish off the toughest toy you can buy in less than 20 minutes. I have both types of dogs in my house. Know your puppy. Start out with a rubber Kong (the black ones are the toughest). Fill it with kibble or a bit of peanut butter (toss it in the freezer in a plastic bag for teething puppies). Supervise play with toys. When you have a puppy in the house, they will put everything in their mouths.

Recording Heath Information in the Berner-Garde Database

Our breed founded the first comprehensive canine health database to support genetic research and improvement of the Bernese Mountain Dog. I am a former trustee of this organization, and I believe in its goals.

Breeding is not an exact science. For any breeder to improve his or her lines, the breeder must know about the health issues

affecting the dogs that she breeds as well as those that she uses as dam or stud dog. In this regard, health information on pets is just as important as that of a show dog. Similarly non-breeding dogs are important. Your contract refers to this database. Your puppy packet contains information on the Berner-Garde database and how to use it. Your puppies is already in the database, so our jobs are to stay in touch with each other and document the health and accomplishments of your dog so that breeders have the information they need to improve the overall health of the breed.

Grooming/Nail Trimming

The Bernese Mountain Dog is a relatively easy dog to groom. Weekly combing, monitoring nail length and trimming if necessary, and trimming the hair between the foot pads will keep grooming needs to a minimum.

Maintaining the Coat

A Berner has a double coat, the outer coat to keep dirt off and the undercoat to keep him warm and dry. Shedding in dogs is ongoing, but major shedding is triggered by the amount of daylight (phototropic) rather than the air temperature as most people believe. A major shed in the dog world is called “blowing coat.” Spayed or neutered Berners undergo major shedding roughly twice a year. An unsplayed female will also shed at times associated with hormonal fluctuations as she comes in and out of season! To maintain good coat health, comb your dog weekly. If you do this, he will not develop mats and you will be removing most of the dead hair that will otherwise collect in the corners of your house. I do not use a brush, rather I use a “greyhound comb” because it does a better job of removing dead hair and mats. Occasionally, I will use a rake. Start now to familiarize your puppy with the tools of a well-groomed dog—combs, brushes, baths, nail clippers/Dremels and dog dryers. By the time your puppy comes to you, he has had at least two baths, encountered a blow dryer while standing on a grooming table, and heard the buzz of a Dremel.

If you do not wish to bathe your own dog, select a groomer who knows how to groom Bernese Mountain Dogs. In general, that means trimming the feet along the floor and between the toes and sometimes stripping (pulling out) the “frizzles” around the ears.



Bente and Kilo at 1 year.

I do not recommend shaving the dog during the summer because it risks sunburn and melanoma (skin cancer). If it is hot enough for you to contemplate shaving, the dog should be brought indoors where it is cool. This also prevents him from suffering heat stroke. Once he is fully immunized (around the 4th month), start taking him to your groomer so that he will not be traumatized.

If you choose to bathe your own dog, here is my advice. I bathe my non-show dogs once every couple of months in my garage using a Booster Bath, a grooming table, and doggie blow dryer. Booster Baths can sometimes be found new for \$99 to \$129 (shipping included) on Costco’s website. New grooming tables can be found on the PetEdge website as well as others (around \$100). I use All-Systems Conditioning Shampoo (I buy it by the gallon for about \$25 and it lasts forever—dilute 20 parts water to 1 part shampoo). Do not use human shampoo. The skin pH of a dog is different from that of a human. Dog shampoos are especially formulated for canine skin pH. After you bathe your dog, he should be dried thoroughly with a cool dog dryer. Do not use a human dryer as they can burn the dog’s skin. New dog dryers can be found for \$129 to \$400. Metro Air Force dryers are good value for pet owners as well as beginning show exhibitors. They run around \$160 new. It is possible if you belong to a local BMD club that you can buy these used at substantial discount.

Trimming Nails

Nail trimming is best started at home, and I prefer using a variable-speed, plug-in, Dremel (you can get them at any of the Big

Do not grind too much nail at a time or you will cut into the “quick” (blood vessel in the nail). Also, do not use the tool at high speeds because it could heat the nail. Be especially careful with black nails because you cannot see where the blood vessel begins on them.



Box stores, and they have other uses beyond trimming dog nails). I start by turning the Dremel on close to the puppy. Turn on, give puppy a treat. Do that for several days. Next, trim ONE nail. Give a treat. Do that for several days. Gradually increase the number of nails at a time, always giving a treat after each nail. The idea is to associate nail trimming with something good—a treat. It is a slow process, but the nail trimmed with a Dremel is much nicer to look at than one cut with a clipper. Do not grind too much nail at a time or you will cut into the “quick” (blood vessel in the nail). Also, do not use the tool at high speeds because it could heat the nail. Be especially careful with black nails because you cannot see where the blood vessel begins on them. Don’t forget the dewclaw on the front leg (the rear dewclaws have been removed). Your puppy has heard the sound of a Dremel once or twice when you take him home. He has also felt the touch of a comb and has had at least one bath.

I have had only one instance of a hot spot (pyotraumatic dermatitis) on the skin of one of my many Bernese Mountain Dogs. It was when I got in a hurry and failed to fully dry the dog before putting her in a crate in the back of a fully-packed van for a three-day road trip to the hot south. My otherwise excellent record with hot spots I attribute to regular combing to remove mats that often keep moisture against the skin, allowing bacteria to grow. Through no fault of the owner, some dogs may develop superficial pyodema. If your dog develops a hot spot, trim the hair around the sore to prevent further spread of the infection and expose the edges of the lesion; wash

the area in a mild water-based astringent or antiseptic; and be prepared to use antibiotics or cortisone if the washing does not give results in a day or two. Be sure that you are using flea control.

Riding in a Car

From the moment I pick my puppy up from a breeder, they are riding with me on short errands. I have a wire crate bungee corded in the back of my van (they do not leave the crate). They learn to associate the car with something other than just going to the veterinarian’s office. I am a strong believer in using crates when I take my dog on the road. A bungee-secured crate protects the dog in case of an accident and it also protect the driver from a canine projectile hitting them in the neck. Moreover, it prevents a driver from being distracted by the activities of a roaming canine. You will find an emergency tag to put on your crate in your puppy packet. Some puppies may have a sensitive stomach, so it is best not to feed them before their first ride.

In my neighborhood, I am known as the “lady with Berners” because I go for my morning Starbuck’s coffee, back my van into the parking stall directly in front of the coffee shop picture window, flip up the van door behind which my puppy crates are located, and clip my laminated sign on the crates. “Please help me socialize my puppy to all types of people. Talk to him, but don’t put your fingers in his crate.” I then go in for my coffee and sit by the picture window where I can see what is going on. If you place the crates so the crate door opens inside the van, you do not need to worry about someone opening the crate door. My Berners grow up loving to go for a ride. I just say, “Bye, Bye,” and they run to the garage door/car.

Learning to be a Good Dog

Dogs are not born good dogs. They are made into good dogs with love and gentle but consistent education. In all the time that I have spent with my dogs, two things stand out. Dogs love routine and if they are not learning, it is because the owner is giving inconsistent cues and/or reinforcing the wrong behaviors, consciously or unconsciously. So if your dog is not learning something (to stop jumping or biting), it is likely because you (or the other members of your family) are giving him inconsistent cues/reinforcements. Owners often reinforce poor behavior—it thunders and the owner rushes to

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the dog, the dog jumps up on the owner and the owner makes eye contact or talks to him. The owner makes a big deal each time he leaves the house and the dog develops separation anxiety. Reinforce good behaviors. Ignore bad ones.

Find a safe puppy class. I recommend those that your veterinarian may sponsor. You have a higher probability that the puppies in that class are under good veterinary supervision. Even for puppy classes at your vet clinic, I would ask if all the "students" have been immunized and the date of the last case of parvo that the clinic treated.

Once your puppy is fully immunized, register him for a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) class at your local training club. Don't feel bad if you fail the first time. Do it again until you pass. More than training your dog, it trains you to be a consistent and gentle leader. While I do not agree with the concept, many insurance companies require a CGC certificate on any dog in the household before they will insure the property. If you have a child 13 or above, let them take the dog to the classes. It teaches children the value of teamwork as well as the importance of regular practice to make perfect. Your puppy packet contains a book (Canine Good Citizen: Every Dog Can Be One) that will help you prepare your puppy for CGC testing even if you cannot attend a class. If your puppy passes the CGC before 18 months and you send me a copy of his AKC CGC certificate, I will donate \$25 in his name to the AKC-Canine Health Fund, BMDCA Donor Advised Fund. This will go specifically for research important to Bernese Mountain Dog health.

Obedience, rally and draft are other excellent activities for Berners. These tend to be low impact. Berners (and their owners) are sometimes bored by traditional obedience, so rally offers an alternative where the script is not known beforehand. Most Berners love rally and naturally learn to draft if properly introduced. Your dog has a brain, make sure he uses it for constructive activities. For more information on activities, please go to the BMDCA website (see resources), click on Info Series.

I am not a believer in agility for Bernese Mountain Dogs. The true Bernese Mountain Dog conformation standard is a heavy-boned dog. As such, a conformationally-correct dog is not designed to jump and make sharp turns. Many

Berners participate in agility, but they tend to be the lighter-boned dogs. I do not aspire to breed a lighter boned dog.

If you have more questions, please do not hesitate to ask. If you are interested in joining a local Berner club or in joining the national breed club or in subscribing to **The Alpenhorn**, let me know.

Special thanks to Lawrence Gerson, VMD, for reviewing this material.

RESOURCES

Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America
www.bmdca.org/

Berner-Garde Foundation Database
www.bernergarde.org/

AKC/Canine Health Fund
www.akcchf.org/

Orthopedic Foundation for Animals
www.offa.org

Three Rivers Bernese Mountain Dog Club
www.trbmdc.org

ThornCreek Bernese Mountain Dogs
www.thorncreekbmds.org/

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CH Bente HCT-s CGC at 3 years

