

"...I WANT TO BE A BREEDER..."

Increasingly, the Bernese Mountain Dog community is hearing this statement coming from Prospective Puppy Buyers.

First of all, let's dispel the myth that ownership of a purebred dog – of any breed – carries with it some God-given right to breed.

Some – mostly other “breed for greed” type of puppy farmers and merchants – consider this attitude to be restrictive and elitist, and is used to justify indiscriminate, unethical and inhumane breeding practices. We, on the other hand, consider restrictive breeding to be a part of being a good steward of the breed. We all know about the horror stories of other popular breeds that were devastated by careless and ignorant overbreeding – we are committed to doing whatever we can to avoid that fate for our beloved berners.

“But I paid good money for my dog – I have the right to breed if I want to.”

No, in fact, you don't. This is at the sole discretion of the breeder of your dog. A good breeder will not sell their puppies with full breeding rights to everyone. This is only done by bad breeders. If you are absolutely determined to breed, you will probably have to buy your pup from a puppy miller or ignorant Backyard Breeder, or go to an import broker who ships puppies in from Eastern European countries, where puppy mills are flourishing to supply a market you want to contribute to. The quality of the pup you buy from these sources is probably not going to be a good representative of the breed, and could very well be carrying all sorts of genetic and temperament problems, which will be passed on to their puppies. Not the best way to start out on your breeding program, is it?

Oh, and speaking of money – it would be a good idea to check your liability coverage. Many states have Puppy Lemon Laws and allow buyers to sue you for fraud and misrepresentation if you breed genetically defective puppies.

“But I think it would be fun to have just one litter...”

or

“So my children can experience the miracle of birth...”

or

“I want another dog just like Fluffy...”

or

“We want to make our money back...”

None of these are good reasons to breed. Dogs should be bred for one reason and one reason only – to improve the breed. You've heard the expression “Making a baby is the easiest thing to do; being a good parent is the hardest.” Same thing applies to dog breeding. It's easy to make a mess of puppies, but very difficult to be a good breeder. Good breeding is both an art and a science, and requires extensive knowledge and experience with dogs.

“But these are such beautiful dogs and all my friends want one...”

Every owner thinks their dog is the most beautiful in the world. We all suffer from kennel blindness in that regard. That is only one of MANY requirements that would potentially make your dog a good breeding dog.

As to all your friends wanting your puppies – experience says these friends interest evaporates quickly as the day draws near for them to take their puppies, especially if you are going to charge them real money for the pups.

“But I just want to breed nice puppies for nice people...”

This is what the Backyard Breeder and puppy miller says. If you don't want to buy a puppy from this kind of breeder, do you really want to become one yourself?

“But I would be a responsible breeder...”

This information packet is riddled with the components of what makes up a responsible breeder. Study that information as ask yourself honestly if you have the level of commitment necessary to “do it right.”

A BETTER WAY

For most puppy buyers, this is their first Bernese Mountain dog. Find a good breeder and let your first puppy be your wonderful companion. Join your regional BMD club. If you like the fun of friendly competition, train your berner in competitive obedience and enter obedience events that the AKC sponsors. Or teach your berner to pull the cart. That's what these guys were bred to do, and many of them just LOVE this activity. Become an active member of the berner community. Become friendly with breeders who are club members, pick their brains, study berners being shown in the ring. Begin to learn what terms like Type, Structure, Bone, Layback, Toplevel, etc, mean. These are all terms used to describe the physical characteristics of the breed. Study temperaments. Research different lines of dogs to see which lines carry which types of temperaments. Berner temperments vary widely. Some are friendly and outgoing; some are reserved (the breed standard uses the term “aloof”), some are terribly shy. All this is the beginning of the learning process that will prepare you to be a good breeder. These things are not learned overnight, but over years of study and education. In a few years you will look back and see how little you knew, and how much more there is to learn.