

A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER

What does a responsible breeder look like? Here are a few things to help guide you.

1. Responsible breeders show their dogs. Bad breeders bad mouth the “snooty show people” but the fact remains that if you are breeding to improve the breed, then you want to breed dogs that are good representatives of the breed, that demonstrate proper type, structure, bone, movement and temperament. This is best decided in the show ring. It’s easy to breed inferior specimens, but how does that help the breed? Berners from commercial puppy factories tend to be collie headed, no necked, thin boned, gay tailed, spindly dogs that look more like border collies than berners. Is this what you want?
2. Responsible breeders know the health history of their dogs. They have generations of dogs in the ancestry that have been tested and cleared of crippling hip and elbow dysplasia. Their dogs have had their eyes tested and are clear of genetic eye defects, like PRA. Their dogs have been tested for VonWillibrands disease and cleared. Additionally, responsible breeders can tell you about the dogs in the ancestry as to age at a dogs death, what they died from, etc.
3. Responsible breeders sell most of their puppies as companion pets, and have a spay/neuter clause in the contract. This is because there is a lot involved in being a good breeder, and good breeders don’t want to further the problem of the ignorant backyard breeder.
4. Responsible breeders carefully screen potential owners. The mere desire to acquire a bernese mountain dog doesn’t automatically qualify a buyer as a responsible owner. Just having the money to buy these dogs doesn’t make a responsible owner (we routinely rescue berners purchased from pet stores for up to \$3000. These dogs are dumped once they become inconvenient or develop health or temperament problems). Money does not translate into a responsible owner. These are wonderful dogs, but they don’t work in every lifestyle, and a good breeder is much more concerned that their puppies are placed in the best homes possible, not just about making sales and money.
5. Responsible breeders keep track of the puppies they place. They want to know about health problems – they encourage owners – even of pet puppies – to have their dogs radio graphed for hips and elbows. They encourage owners to enter their dogs in the berner-garde database (see this at www.bmdca.org). This information helps good breeders in their future breeding decisions.
6. Responsible breeders are active in their regional and national breed clubs.
7. Responsible breeders have a clause in their contracts that owners return their dog to the breeder in the event they are unable to keep the dog. A good breeder recognizes that they have a lifetime responsibility for the dogs they have brought into the world. A good breeder doesn’t want their dogs dumped in shelters, or jettisoned into rescue if owners can’t keep their dogs. A good breeder is also willing to assist with rescue of other berners, bred by bad breeders who wash their hands of the dogs once the sale is done.
8. Responsible breeders are perpetual students of the breed. They study pedigrees and lines; they are current on health issues; they study and learn to improve their own breeding programs.

