



# BMDCA Info Series

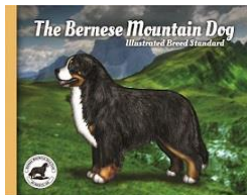
**BMDs, Conformation, Owner-Handlers, & Juniors**

**2023 #17**

**Introduction** ► The primary purpose of a conformation event, commonly referred to as a “dog show,” is to evaluate how closely the dogs conform to the breed standard. Each breed has a standard by which it is judged. These standards describe the characteristics that allow the breed to perform the function(s) for which it was bred. Also included are specifications for structure, movement, and temperament.

As described on the AKC website: “*The official standard for each breed, and any revision thereof, originates with an AKC parent club, the national organization devoted to a particular breed. Parent-club members vote on the standard or revision, then the club submits it to the AKC Board of Directors for approval. Once approved, a standard becomes both the breeder’s ‘blueprint’ and the instrument used by dog-show judges to evaluate the breeder’s work.*”

The Bernese Mountain Dog Official Standard can be found on the BMDCA website and an Illustrated Standard can be purchased from the BMDCA online store. (<https://www.bmdca.org/>)



## **AKC Conformation Dog Shows** ►

AKC’s website contains a wealth of information. *A Beginner’s Guide to Dog Shows* is an excellent primer for the newcomer. (<https://images.akc.org/pdf/events/conformation/GESHW1.pdf>) On the Conformance page you will find links and materials for *Getting Started*, Exhibitor Resources, and much more. (<https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/>)

## **Types of AKC Conformation Dog Shows** ►

There are three types of conformation dog shows. **All-breed shows** offer competitions for all of the breeds and varieties of dogs recognized by the AKC. **Specialty shows** are restricted to dogs of a specific breed (such as the Bernese) or to varieties of one breed. The annual BMDCA National Specialty is held in the spring, and its location changes each year as different clubs and consortia serve as hosts. Regional BMD clubs also



sponsor specialty shows throughout the year. Information about these specialty shows can be found on the BMDCA and AKC websites. **Group shows** are limited to dogs belonging to one of the seven groups, such as the Working Group, which includes Bernese Mountain Dogs (BMDs).

Other types of AKC conformation competition include **Match and FSS Open Shows**. For more information go to <https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/fss-open-show/match-shows-vs-fss-open-shows/>.

## **4-6 Month Beginner Puppy Competition** ►

“*The 4 to 6 Month Beginner Puppy Competition is intended to introduce new exhibitors and their puppies to the show world in a stress-free and relaxed environment. It also provides an opportunity for puppies to socialize with people and other dogs at an optimal time of their development. Puppies may earn points towards a Certificate of Merit title or Puppy of Achievement certificate at these competitions.*” For more information go to <https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/4-6-month-puppy/about/>.

## **Eligibility for AKC Conformation Competition** ►

As stipulated by the AKC, to be eligible for conformation competition a dog must:

- be registered with the AKC;
- be six months or older;
- be a breed for which there are classes at the show;
- conform with eligibility requirements that are in the breed’s written standard; and,
- not be spayed or neutered.

## **Understanding The Basics of AKC**

**Conformation Competition** ► Most dogs entered in conformation competition are striving to earn points to become an AKC “Champion of Record.” To achieve an AKC championship, a dog must obtain a total of 15 points with at least two major wins under two different judges. A major win is worth three, four, or five points. At least one other judge must award some of the remaining points. The number of points that can be awarded at a dog show is determined by the number of dogs that are competing for points – the greater the number of dogs competing, the greater the number of points awarded up to a maximum of five. The point schedule can vary by AKC division across the country.

([http://www.akc.org/events/conformation/counting\\_points.cfm](http://www.akc.org/events/conformation/counting_points.cfm).)

For more information, please visit our website at [www.bmdca.org](http://www.bmdca.org).

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At AKC dog shows males and females compete separately. Dogs that are not yet champions are entered into one of the following classes.

- 6 to under 9 months
- 9 to under 12 months
- 12 to under 15 months
- 15 to under 18 months
- Novice
- Amateur-Owner-Handler
- Bred By Exhibitor
- American-Bred
- Open

After all of the classes have been completed for that sex, the first place winner of each class is brought back into the ring to compete for the designation of Winners Dog (best male dog) and Winners Bitch (best female dog). These winners then compete in the Best of Breed Competition, which includes dogs that are already AKC champions. Usually, at the end of Best of Breed Competition several awards are given:

- **Best of Breed (BOB)** – This dog is determined to be the best specimen of its breed.
- **Best of Winners (BOW)** – This dog is determined to be the better of the Winners Dog (WD) and Winners Bitch (WB).
- **Best of Opposite Sex (BOS)** – This dog is the best dog of the opposite sex to the Best of Breed winner.
- **Select Dog (SD) & Select Bitch (SB)** – These placements designate the champion dog and bitch that are the next best as far as the quality of the dogs in competition.

The Best of Breed winner then advances to compete in the Working Group competition, which is one of the seven AKC group classifications. The other groups are Sporting, Hound, Terrier, Toy, Non-Sporting, and Herding. Should the Berner place first in the Working Group, it again advances to Best in Show competition where all of the group first place winners compete for the Best in Show designation.

The AKC has added the Grand Champion title, which is similar to the traditional Champion title but requires a champion to continue showing, earning 25 points with additional stipulations. There are four additional levels of Grand Champions – Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. For more information, including how to calculate Grand Champion points, go to <http://www.akc.org/grandchampionship/>.

To assist newcomers to Conformation, the AKC offers an Exhibitor Mentoring Program - <https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/mentor-program/>.

### **AKC National Owner-Handled Series ►**

As described on the AKC website: “*The purpose of the AKC National Owner-Handled Series (NOHS) is to recognize and showcase the quality dogs being exhibited by owner/handlers and to provide a venue for the owner/handlers to compete against their peers. The determination of the awards in the AKC National Owner-Handled Series is based solely on the quality of the entry. The owner/handler’s handling ability is not of consideration.*” “*The AKC National Owner-Handled Series will be conducted following Best of Breed judging in each breed ring. All dogs in the BOB competition (including WD & WB) will stay in the ring after the judge makes their placements in BOB competition. The ring steward will ask all professional handlers, household members, and current assistants to professional handler to leave the ring and the judge will then select the Best Owner-Handled (BOH). The dog and its owner will continue to accrue points for any group placements or Bests in Show.*” For more information about this program, which includes FAQs,

Levels of Achievement, Regulations, and more, go to <https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/national-owner-handled-series/akc-national-owner-handled-series-best-practices/>.

**AKC Junior Showmanship ►** The AKC offers specific Junior Showmanship classes, which are organized by age. The Junior class levels are Novice, Open, and Master. “Each of the regular classes may be divided by age into Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Classes, provided the division is specified in the premium list.” A Junior Class is for boys and girls who are at least 9 years old and under 12 years old on the day of the show. The Intermediate Class is for boys and girls who are at least 12 years old and under 15 years old on the day of the show. The Senior Class is for boys and girls who are at least 15 years old and under 18 years old on the day of the show. Competitors are judged on their ability to handle their dogs rather than the quality of their dogs. Dogs eligible to compete in Junior Showmanship classes must have an AKC PAL/ILP, Full- or Limited-Registration, and be owned by the junior, a member of the junior’s family, or a member of the junior’s household. Spayed or neutered dogs are eligible for competition.

In addition to Junior Showmanship, Juniors may participate in Conformation and the performance sports without any age limits. They are allowed to compete in the regular classes with all of the other exhibitors at the trials and tests. And, Juniors can obtain the same titles and awards as their adult counterparts.

The BMDCA has welcomed Junior members since the Club formed in 1968 and has enthusiastically supported Juniors over the years. Many of the adult faces we see in competition of all kinds, and as breeders and club leaders, are our Juniors of



Juniors and advisors at the 2018 National Specialty.

**AKC Disabled Competitors Policy ►** The “AKC complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act and wants to provide to all the opportunity to participate in its events. In the case of conformation judging, where decisions are based solely on the quality of the dogs, the judge may modify the regular judging procedure to reasonably accommodate a disabled exhibitor. If a modification of normal judging procedure is required, you need only to determine that the accommodation would not inhibit the ability of other handlers in the ring to show their dogs.” For more information go to <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/sports/disability-accommodation-akc-dog-sports-apply/> .

**Concluding Thoughts ►** Conformation is a wonderful activity for people of all ages and their canine companions. Contact your regional BMD and nearby all-breed clubs to join in on the fun!