



March 3, 2020

TO: Non-US Bernese Mountain Dog Clubs and Breeders

SUBJ: Information on the exporting of Bernese to the United States of America (USA)

Dear Fellow Bernese Club Members and Breeders,

Recently, it has come to our attention that breeders from the European Union and other countries had questions on what controls are in place within the USA regarding canine breeding. Unfortunately, the USA **does not** have laws nor controls governing who can breed dogs or which domesticated dogs can be bred.

Any dog can be bred to any other dog, without regulated evaluation or a kennel club approval. Even with the “purebred dog”, such as the Bernese, there are no regulatory breeding controls. There is no requirement to consider the breed standard and the mating pair’s relationship to that standard, the pair’s breed characteristics, or whether appropriate health screening has been completed in determining whether either dog should be used in a breeding program. Additionally, there are no laws governing how often a dog can be bred or used as a stud.

We share your concern about what resources are available in determining the right home for puppies, especially when a potential owner lives thousands of miles away from you. As the breed’s popularity has increased over the years so has the purchase price of a Berner. The price a potential US owner or breeder will pay for one of your puppies is not indicative of the quality of life your puppy will have. BMDCA members have helped on several occasions to rescue puppies that were exported to what a non-US breeder thought was a good home, only to find out later that the puppy had been sent to a high-volume, commercial breeding facility.

Please do your research if you are considering exporting a puppy to the USA to a person either you, or a trusted friend does not know. The BMDCA has assembled the attached information to facilitate the vetting of a potential puppy owner or breeder. We hope this will assist you to determine whether your potential puppy buyer meets your standards for a “reputable breeder” or puppy owner. This information may be forwarded to your clubs’ members and breeders.

The well-being of Bernese imported into the US is a major concern for all. Significant time, money, and resources are involved in the rescue of Bernese that are sold unknowingly to irresponsible breeders or owners. Together, we can strive to reduce these occurrences.

If you have any questions regarding the attached information, please contact one of the International Relations Committee members listed below:

Tracey Keith, Chair wyndriftbmd@earthlink.net

Lilian Ostermiller losterm@optonline.net

Madeline Knowles swisskiss-bmd@shaw.ca

Alexis Smith lexsmith@att.net

Sandy Novocin santeraken@comcast.net

You may also contact the following BMDCA Committee Chairs:

Dawn Cox, Chair, Breeder Mentor Program cox215@comcast.net

Kathy Deyo, Chair, Rescue Program kdeyo@clearwater.net

On behalf of the BMDCA,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georgeann Reeve". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Georgeann Reeve, President

Attachment:

Evaluating the Potential US Puppy Owner or Breeder

EVALUATING THE POTENTIAL US BMD BREEDER OR PUPPY OWNER

The decision whether a buyer in the USA should receive one of your puppies is not based on a single factor. Information about many characteristics should be collectively evaluated and a decision made whether the potential buyer shares your goals for your breeding program and for the future of the breed. It is a decision only you can make. Focus on, among other factors, the potential owner's breeding goals (temperament, health, standard), club memberships, breed health knowledge and testing, mentoring relationships, BMD Breeder puppy owners' evaluations, etc. Please do so thoughtfully and carefully with all the information you can. We sincerely hope you find the below information helpful and useful in helping you make the right decision when considering selling one of your precious puppies to a buyer in the United States.

1. Below are sources of information to help with your decision to find out more about the background of a buyer or any dogs the buyer may have or have had in the past:

a. BERNER-GARDE FOUNDATION

The Berne-Garde Foundation was established to collect, maintain and disseminate information about genetic diseases observed in the Bernese Mountain Dog. The foundation maintains an open database of pedigrees, health, and other information with respect to dogs entered in the database. It is widely used by reputable breeders as both a source of information and a data repository. Information in the database is publicly available online, free of charge to everyone. Breeders, owners, and puppy buyers can research pedigrees and how certain dogs might fit into a breeding or puppy buying decision. Veterinarians and researchers who are working to reduce genetic disease in the Bernese Mountain Dog can access information in the database and are welcome to contact Berner-Garde for additional assistance. For more information about Berner-Garde and to view the database:

<http://www.bernergarde.org/home/>

b. BMDCA REGIONAL CLUBS

Regional BMD Clubs are located throughout the United States. Their members are active in the breed and usually know breeder members of the club as well as other breeders in the club's area. Many of the clubs are involved in BMD rescues and re-homes so they are well aware of the BMD breeding issues in their region. Contact with a member may provide valuable information not available online. Contact information for the chairman of the BMDCA rescue committee is available on the BMDCA rescue page listed below:

<http://bmdca.org/rescue/index.php>

http://bmdca.org/rcc/Regional_Clubs.php

c. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES

i. References may be obtained from:

- ~Past and present puppy owners of the buyer if they are a BMD Breeder
- ~Past and present breeder of buyer's current dogs
- ~Past and current veterinarian

ii. The buyer's local jurisdiction animal management and control departments (county, city, township) can be contacted to check for any previous or current regulatory infractions

iii. ORTHOPEDIC FOUNDATION FOR ANIMALS (OFA) <https://www.ofa.org/>

The OFA was established in 1966 as a private “not for profit” organization. The mission of the organization is to promote the health and welfare of companion animals through a reduction in the incidence of genetic disease. Some of their current databases include cardiac disease, hip and elbow dysplasia, eye disease, thyroid, and Degenerative Myelopathy. If an owner has completed health screenings on their Bernese and elected to have the results included in the OFA databases, you can check the screenings completed and the results by entering the dog’s registration number into the search function box at the top of the OFA home page (*note: some owners may prefer to enter health screening results solely in the Berner-Garde database so you may need to check both sources*).

2. USA breeders may use two terms to refer to people who often import Bernese Mountain Dogs into our country for personal gain in creating commercial breeding facilities. These facilities can exist to produce a high volume of breeding and may have limited interest in the welfare of the dogs used in their breeding program. Their main interest is usually monetary profit.

a. PUPPY MILLS

There is no standard definition of a “puppy mill”, but conditions in a facility generally exist to maximize profitability with little or no concern for the welfare of the dogs. High volume commercial breeders may be referred to as puppy millers. The Animal Legal and Historical Center at Michigan State University in their article entitled *Table of State Commercial Pet Breeder Laws*, state that “generally, though not always, a commercial dog breeder is defined as someone who breeds a large number of dogs (usually 20 or more) within a certain time frame (usually 12 months)”. These dogs may be bred without health clearances and/or be bred every cycle.

<https://www.animallaw.info/topic/table-state-commercial-pet-breeders-laws>

<https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-commercial-breeders-and-puppy-mills-0>

b. PUPPY BROKER AND PUPPY GO BETWEENS

Puppy brokers buy puppies from breeders for resale to individual puppy buyers, pet stores, and puppy mills. Some examples of **PUPPY GO BETWEENS**: puppyfind.com, puppyspot.com, nextdaypets.com

This type of enterprise acts as a middleman between the BMD Breeder and the ultimate puppy owner. Their goal is to market puppies available for sale by breeders and usually provide descriptions with photos of the puppy. They act as a commercial enterprise with marketing efforts via radio, internet and TV advertising. Information about the BMD Breeder may or may not be initially listed. The buyers *may not* be required to meet either the breeder or the broker and the broker may not provide any information about the buyer to the breeder. The purchase price of a puppy will usually include an added fee charged by the broker.

3. Other links that provide more information about the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America and the goals that the club achieves to attain:

a. BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG CLUB OF AMERICA (BMDCA)

The constitution of the BMDCA states the overall objectives and guiding principles of the organization in maintaining the integrity of the breed and its members:

http://www.bmdca.org/club/constitution_bylaws.php

b. BMDCA INFO SERIES #20 – BMD’s & CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE BREEDING

This Info Series Document discusses the various considerations of being a responsible breeder

~ BMD Standard: http://bmdca.org/jec/breed_standard.php

<https://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/bernese-mountain-dog/>

~Responsible Breeder Roles

~ Evaluating the Litter

~Puppy Contracts

http://bmdca.org/breed_education/pdf/20_bernese_dogcare_responsible_breeding.pdf

c. BMDCA CODE OF CONDUCT

The BMDCA Code of Conduct lists the guiding principles of the organization and the minimum conduct of its members: <http://www.bmdca.org/club/coc.php>

---END---