

Bernese Mountain Dog



One of the most beautiful of Swiss dogs, used by the weavers of Berne as a draught dog, and also employed in herding sheep and cattle. He is still occasionally harnessed to a light cart, which he enjoys pulling, often to the delight of the small children riding inside.

Though the Bernese carries the traditional Swiss colouring of black and tan with white markings. The breed can be traced back to the Roman invasion of what we now call Switzerland some 2,000 years ago. Caesar's troops, which were always on the move, needed dogs to guard their supplies and the mastiff types they brought with them eventually mated with local flock-guarders, from which the Bernese evolved with an ability to withstand the severe weather of the Alps.

The name is taken from the canton of Berne, and the Bernese has also attracted other less flattering names, such as Gelbbacken (Yellow Cheeks) and Vieraugen (Four Eyes) while the association as a draft dog also earned them the name of 'Cheese Factory Dog'.

Of imposing stature, the striking tricolour markings of his soft, silky coat add to his impressive appearance. Never aggressive, he is a gentleman, kind and courteous, well mannered and affectionate. Not a noisy dog, but obedient and easily trained, he makes a perfect companion for children and a devoted family pet.

What about Health Issues?

You may be aware that some breeds of dog (and crossbreeds too) can be susceptible to inherited disease. Of course you want to be sure that the puppy you choose is as healthy as possible, and you would like to know that it has not inherited any undesirable disease-causing genes from its parents. There is some help in that DNA tests for diseases in purebred dogs are available for some conditions in some breeds, but there are not very many such tests just yet! There are also, however, a number of clinical veterinary screening schemes that dog breeders can use to increase the probability of producing healthy puppies.

Details of the various screening schemes, both veterinary and DNA, that are available to breeders in the UK can be found on the Kennel Club's website at:

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/doghealth

Puppy buyers should be aware that, at present, the application of various health screening results to breeding programmes is not always straightforward, and breeders may make choices for various reasons. A responsible breeder though, will always be willing to discuss relevant health issues with you. Breed clubs are often useful sources of breed-specific information.

And what health screening is relevant for the Bernese Mountain Dog?

Kennel Club Accredited Breeders must use, or are strongly recommended to use, the following screening schemes and/or advice for sires and dams:

- BVA/KC Hip Dysplasia Scheme
- BVA/KC Elbow Dysplasia Scheme
- Dams not to whelp a litter under two years old

This list is not necessarily comprehensive and you should still ask breeders and refer to breed clubs about health issues in the breed.