



Code of Ethics

OUR PURPOSE

To develop diverse social and educational activities which enhance and promote responsible relationships between Bernese Mountain Dogs and their owners. With the emphasis on having fun with the dogs, club events will establish a knowledge base to inform and educate both current and potential owners regarding breed health and conformation to the recognized breed standard.

OUR MISSION

To maintain a positive image of Bernese Mountain Dogs through public interaction, sportsmanlike competition, and responsible dog ownership.

For All Members:

1. In all situations members shall be aware that the club exists to protect the breed, and shall act solely in the best interest of the breed and the membership as a whole, and should willingly aid any fellow member in upholding these interests.
2. In all dog related activities, the welfare of the dog is considered before the goals of the trainer, breeder, owner, organizer, sponsor, or official.
3. Members shall at all times conduct themselves in such a manner as to reflect credit on the club and the breed, and refrain from unnecessary criticism, which is not constructive, of another's dog, and from personal attacks on fellow members.
4. Novices are encouraged to seek the advice and assistance of more experienced owners and breeders, and the more experienced should graciously assist novices with their concerns, and share, for the good of the breed, the benefits of their knowledge.
5. Members agree to abide by AKC and BMDCA rules applicable to activities in which they engage.
6. Members should utilize organizations such as OFA, PennHIP, CERF, and VetGen for evaluation of individual traits in all of their Bernese Mountain Dogs, including both breeding candidates and companion animals. Clearances that were from GDC, though no longer in existence, are valid and have been merged with OFA. To further the goal of reducing and eliminating the presence of genetic diseases in Bernese Mountain Dogs, members should enter all findings from these evaluations (both affected and unaffected) in the Berner-Garde Foundation, stewards of the Open Bernese Mountain Dog Database.

Regarding Treatment of Bernese Mountain Dogs:

1. All Bernese Mountain Dogs that members own or care for shall be provided with a proper, safe, healthy environment, nutrition, and care at all times. They shall be treated in a humane manner, and given proper attention, affection, and training to ensure a well-mannered dog, remembering that the most important purpose of a Bernese Mountain Dog is to be a companion.
2. Members shall recognize their responsibility to protect the reputation of the breed, being diligent in the handling of their dogs in public places minimizing risk of trauma or danger to any human or animal, and not allowing their dogs to become public nuisances.

For All Breeders:

1. Recognizing the extended growth pattern of a large breed, breeders should ideally not breed a bitch before she is 24 months old, and not more than two out of three seasons.
2. Breeders should be familiar with the AKC rules applicable to litter registration and individual registration. Bernese Mountain Dogs on limited registration should not be used for breeding.
3. Breeders should be open and honest with all prospective buyers about breeding from lines in which any serious or disabling hereditary defects occur, and honest with other breeders about the dogs and their lines when considering a stud or bitch with which to breed.
4. Bernese Mountain Dogs to be bred should be radiographed for hip and elbow dysplasia, and receive eye-screening exams for the presence of hereditary eye diseases, and should be tested for other hereditary diseases, such as von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) by DNA analysis through VetGen. Results of these tests should be disclosed to owners of stud dogs and bitches, and to all buyers of the puppies.

5. It is the responsibility of both breeders to ascertain that any Bernese Mountain Dogs brought together for the purpose of breeding are evaluated according to this Code of Ethics, whether or not club members own the dogs. They should further ascertain to the best of their ability that any puppies produced from such breeding will be raised and sold in a manner in keeping with the ethical standards of this Code.

For All Sellers and Buyers:

1. Sellers and buyers will be concerned first and foremost with the health and welfare of the animal in question.
2. Sellers should ascertain that the prospective buyer is aware of the needs and characteristics of a Bernese Mountain Dog, and has the knowledge and ability to properly care for the growing and grown dog, and buyers should educate themselves about the breed and potential health issues.
3. No member shall engage in brokering or wholesaling of litters or in individual sales or consignments to pet shops, dealers, catalogues, or other commercial establishments. Bernese Mountain Dogs shall not be donated or given as prizes for raffles, contests, or fundraising, no matter how charitable.
4. Sellers should be available to their buyers for any advice, and should assist that buyer in finding a suitable home for that dog if the buyer must relinquish the dog. Seller should assume responsibility for that dog if buyer is unwilling or unable to find such a home.
5. Buyers and sellers should be open and honest in their dealings with each other, stating expectations clearly, and should honor all contractual agreements made with each other. Contracts or agreements should be in writing and signed by the parties involved. AKC will only honor that which is in writing.
6. Buyers should inform the seller of address changes throughout the life of the dog, and of any health issues concerning the dog.

Glossary of terms:

Should: Indicates an educational suggestion, which is recommended and desirable but not mandated.

Shall: Indicates those areas we feel must be followed in the best interest of the breed, and for which there may be consequences if not followed.

Breeder: A person who brings together two dogs with the intent of producing a third dog, regardless of the method of conception, and regardless of offspring result.

Buyer: As defined by contractual agreement.

Seller: As defined by contractual agreement.

OFA: The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals

PennHIP: A method to evaluate a dog for susceptibility to Hip Dysplasia. The radiographic procedure involves a special positioning of the dog so that the dog's "passive hip laxity" can be accurately measured.

GDC: The Institute for Genetic Disease Control in Animals

CERF: The Canine Eye Registration

VetGen: Veterinary Genetic Services

Berner-Garde: A foundation set up to facilitate the orderly acquisition and dissemination of information related to genetic traits in Bernese Mountain Dogs.

As a member of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Hampton Roads (BMDCHR), I agree to abide by this Code of Ethics and to observe the AKC Code of Sportsmanship.

Signed _____ date _____

Signed _____ date _____