

Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America Code of Conduct

(adopted: December 3, 2003)

The membership of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America (BMDCA) is dedicated to:

- promoting the standard of the breed
- advancing the objectives and integrity of the club
- protecting the interests of the breed and individual dogs
- promoting quality and integrity in breeding programs

This code is established to further the objectives of the club as set forth in Section 2 of the BMDCA Constitution and By-laws. BMDCA members recognize that as individuals, our practices of ownership, breeding, sportsmanship, and ethics directly affect the welfare of the breed. We realize that no code will ever cover every behavior necessary to protect the breed. Therefore we acknowledge our actions are the truest reflection of our personal integrity and ethics, our commitment to the enhancement of our breed community, and true concern for the welfare of the breed.

1. Promoting the Standard of the Breed

BMDCA members agree to:

- A) use the breed standard created by the BMDCA and adopted by the American Kennel Club (AKC) for the Bernese Mountain Dog (BMD) to assess the suitability of dogs' temperament and type for exhibition in AKC and club events and for breeding.
- B) participate in and/or support events which promote the breed standard and reflect the breed's history and heritage such as specialty shows, performance events and BMDCA Draft Tests.

2. Advancing the Objectives and Integrity of the Club

BMDCA Members agree to:

- A) adhere to all AKC rules, regulations and requirements pertaining to the sport of dogs, the Constitution, Bylaws, and regulations of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America (BMDCA), and this Code of Conduct (COC).
- B) share knowledge truthfully, constructively and respectfully when conveying information about members and members' breeding programs, as well as about individual BMD's.
- C) display good sportsmanship and conduct themselves in a manner that gives credit to the BMDCA, the AKC, and the breed.
- D) encourage and promote public awareness of responsible pet ownership.
- E) ensure that in all dog related activities, the dog's welfare takes precedence over considerations of breeders, trainers, owners, organizations, sponsors, and officials.
- F) participate in activities and programs sponsored by the BMDCA to the best of their ability.

3. Protecting the Interests of the Breed and Individual Dogs

BMDCA members agree to:

- A) keep only as many dogs for which they can provide a high standard of health care, shelter, nutrition, attention, affection, and overall care.
- B) provide appropriate training, exercise and supervision to ensure their dogs are well mannered, kept in safe conditions, and are not abused or neglected.
- C) not allow their dogs to roam at large unsupervised, nor to become a public nuisance or a public burden.
- D) ensure to their best ability that all dogs they place are not brokered, wholesaled or consigned through a pet shop, auction or other commercial establishment; and are not offered as prizes in contests, raffles or fundraising events.
- E) ensure to their best ability that no stud dog or brood bitch owned by them is bred to any dog or bitch whose owner is directly or indirectly involved with any dog broker, puppy mill, pet shop that retails dogs, auction, litter lot sales, or any other commercial enterprise whose business is involved in these activities.
- F) ensure that all animals released to the care of others have received the health care appropriate for their age and needs.
- G) prior to placing any BMD, discuss with the prospective owner the health care and behavior management needs of the dog and provide recommendations for general care.
- H) guarantee the health of the dog subject to a veterinarian's examination, at a minimum, within 72 hours of placement.
- I) provide assistance to dogs of their breeding in need of rehoming whether through a shelter, auction, rescue organization or an individual. Stud dog owners should also assist with rehoming of dogs sired by their stud dogs.
- BMDCA members are encouraged to:
- J) use a written contract detailing all guarantees, obligations, and expectations of sellers, buyers, receivers and providers of services.
- K) assure that any dog they place which is not suitable for breeding is placed with an AKC limited registration and a non-breeding contract. A spay/neuter requirement is additionally recommended.

4. Promoting Quality and Integrity in Breeding Programs

- Members who wish to breed Bernese Mountain Dogs should do so with the full understanding of the responsibility they bear to the future of the breed and with the paramount intention of improving and protecting the breed. Breeders should understand the breed standard, evaluate individual mature dogs' traits, evaluate traits present in a breeding dog's immediate and extended family, and apply the principles of genetics. Additionally breeders should have a practical knowledge of mating, care of the bitch in whelp, raising a litter, and the time, effort and resources required to engage in this activity.
- Ideally the suitability of BMD's for breeding purposes should be assessed after twenty-four months of age. The BMDCA recognizes that some breeders with extensive knowledge of the breed and of a dog's extended family may, in special circumstances, elect to use less mature animals for breeding. Minimum ages stated in this code are not recommended for use routinely. The recommended age for first breeding a BMD is after twenty-four months.
- Experienced member breeders should make themselves available as a resource to novice breeders when requested. Conversely novice breeders should actively recruit assistance from experienced breeders when engaging in this activity. All members should assist the breeders of their dogs by keeping them informed of their dogs' development throughout life.

BMDCA members who breed agree to:

- A) adhere to AKC rules applying to litter and individual registrations, ensuring that any litter they produce is eligible for AKC registration.

- B) refrain from breeding females prior to eighteen months and males before twelve months of age.
- C) ensure a female bears puppies no more than two out of three seasons. A period of a one-year rest between litters is desirable.
- D) use for breeding only animals which exhibit good type, are in good health, and are physically and temperamentally sound. Shy and aggressive dogs will be eliminated from breeding.
- E) obtain an evaluation for hip and elbow dysplasia from the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) or other BMDCA recognized orthopedic registry prior to using a BMD for breeding. Regardless of any prior evaluations, all dogs over 24 months of age who are to be used for breeding must be evaluated by the OFA or other BMDCA recognized orthopedic registry for hip and elbow dysplasia after 24 months of age and prior to being bred.
- F) provide new owners the following documentation: this COC, an AKC registration application or registration papers for the individual dog, a health and veterinary care history, evidence of the individual's and/or sire and dam's health certifications or evaluations, a four-generation pedigree, and recommendations for general care and training.
- G) remain available for advice, when sought, for the lifetime of offspring from their dogs.
- H) ensure to the best of their ability that puppies produced from any of their BMDs will be raised and sold in a manner in accordance with this COC.
- I) exhibit at dog shows and matches where feasible.

The BMDCA recommends that members:

- J) assess whether prospective breeding candidates and their immediate relatives are affected with or carriers of hereditary disease for which there is diagnostic testing. Such hereditary diseases include, but may not be limited to, hip and elbow dysplasia, eye disease, thyroid disease, heart disease, and von Willebrand disease.
- K) submit and update data to the Berner-Garde database.
- L) use dogs for breeding which are at least two years old, have sound temperament, structure, conformation, and type, and who have been evaluated and are known to be not affected with a crippling nor disabling defect nor affected with a known hereditary disease for which there is diagnostic testing.
- M) refrain from using dogs for breeding which, although unaffected with a specific physical or temperament defect, consistently produce afflicted offspring with different mates.
- N) transfer puppies to new owners in accordance with the laws of their state and meet, at least, the minimum federal standard for transporting puppies (8 weeks of age).
- O) obtain an AKC DNA profile on all dogs used for breeding.

As a member of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America, I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Signature _____

Date _____