



BE PREPARED FOR A BERNER PUP'S ARRIVAL

1) PUPPY PROOFING

Before the puppy is ready to come into your home, there are some things you can do to prepare. Please take the time to 'puppy proof' your home. Puppies are curious and can get into all sorts of mischief, much the same as human toddlers.

► **INSIDE THE HOME** - Use baby gates to block open doorways for rooms that the puppy will not be permitted access on a regular basis. Wiring is a favorite puppy target; so when possible tape or tack electrical cords 2 feet above floor level. Books, magazines, laundry, trash bins should also be placed above floor level unless you plan to watch what your pup is up to every minute.

Happens frequently - dish towel gone missing!!!! Berner puppies are notorious for eating inappropriate things like dishtowels, socks, underwear, string or soft toys. Once ingested, cloth can cause serious damage to the stomach and intestines. Some

dogs will eat these things and they will pass through their system a day or several days later. If you find that an object is missing and your dog does not want to eat, has thrown up or seems to be in any kind of digestive distress, she may need to see a vet. A training tip: Some pups play a chase game with objects and some will gulp things down. By chasing you encourage the dog's game to continue. Instead, try using another acceptable toy or treat to get your pup to give up his object for yours by offering to play your game with your super fun toy. Most dogs just want their owner's attention and will readily change gears to get it.



► **DROP OFFS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE** - A dog's vision does not allow for good depth perception. Dogs are not able to judge vertical distances well. Check for any areas indoors and outdoors that might cause a fall, such as open stairways or landings or open decks with drop-offs. Young puppies may not have developed a good sense of how to navigate stairs and may jump from landings. You will need to have an awareness of your new puppy's familiarity with walking up and down stairs. Providing guidance to the pup to teach him to calmly & safely navigate stairs is advised. Many Berner owners use baby gates to limit puppy's access to stairs for the first 6 months.

► **INSIDE/OUTSIDE** - Please place any hazardous chemicals, garden fertilizers, insecticides, cleaning substances, antifreeze, glues, paints or other poisonous chemicals up off the ground at least 4' - 5' or put them away in a closed secure cabinet.

► **OUTSIDE** - Yard decorations such as cocoa bean mulch and some indoor and outdoor plants can be hazardous. Qualified nurserymen can advise you on which of your plants are pet friendly. Rashes, vomiting, diarrhea, and even convulsions and death are symptoms of poisoning. See the ASPCA's page on toxic plants here-

http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro_apcc_toxicplants

► **KEEP THIS INFORMATION HANDY** - post on your 'frig' or in address book! The ASPCA Poison Control Center provides emergency assistance. The contact information is at http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro_apcc. If you think that your pet may have ingested a potentially poisonous substance, call the ASPCA's Hotline at (888) 426-4435. It can mean the difference between life and death.

► **FENCING** - Check for any small holes in and at the base of outdoor fences and repair them so your puppy can't get under or through the fence. Puppies can easily get their heads stuck in small openings, so make sure holes or gaps are completely covered.

► **WATER HAZARDS** - Pools should be fenced. Generally speaking, most young Berner pups do not have good swimming skills. If your property allows access to a natural body of water with depth be aware Berner pups can fall in, whether water is liquid or partially frozen. Make sure that if the puppy (or adult) has access to walk on frozen ponds, creeks or lakes that the ice is thick enough to hold his weight.

2) ENROLL IN A PUPPY TRAINING/SOCIALIZATION CLASS

Getting your puppy enrolled in a puppy socialization class should be looked into before you bring her home. Often kennel clubs or private training clubs have set schedules and limited class sizes. Check out where and when local classes will be offered. The yellow pages will usually list training facilities or kennel clubs or ask at a local pet store. Planning ahead of time to join a class will allow you to attend the class scheduled during a time that best fits into your schedule. Always ask about how the instructor of the class will be handling corrections. Positive training methods work best with Bernese Mountain Dogs. Early puppy socialization classes will not only provide a necessary social outing for your BMD puppy, but the class instructor will offer you tips on how to begin training your puppy to master basic commands.

TRAINING CLASSES VARY.

Going to training class can present concerns. There are good trainers and not so good trainers. Some classes are very large and may not allow for much one on one instructor to owner contact. It is up to you to find the kind of class that best suits you and your dog's training needs. Watch how the instructor in your class works with people and other dogs. If you feel that your dog is very sensitive or shy you may not want to turn over your dog to the instructor for a demonstration, especially if the trainer seems loud or heavy handed with the other dogs. If you don't think you or your dog are well served in the class you are attending, try another training facility or trainer. The reason for attending classes – your puppy needs and will benefit from exposure to other dogs and people.

3) ARRANGE FOR THE SERVICES OF A VETERINARIAN

Your veterinarian will be very important to maintaining your dog's health throughout a lifetime. Make sure you are comfortable talking with your dog's health care provider. Make sure you can ask questions and express your concerns about your dog to the veterinarian you have chosen. Many people are intimidated by medical doctors and vets. Don't be! You know your own dog better than anyone. The best vets listen and

do not dismiss their client's concerns as insignificant or unimportant. If you do not already have a pet and are looking for a good veterinarian, contact a local AKC all breed kennel club (look in the yellow pages); or better still get a referral from a Bernese Mountain Dog club member. (See the regional club links to find a local BMD club.)

Arranging for an appointment with a veterinarian several weeks in advance of getting your pup will assure your dog is examined and determined to be in good health soon after arrival. *If you are not sure about what kind of vaccines or wormers your puppy has received, be sure to ask the breeder to provide the pup's health record at the time of pick up. Remember to bring the health record provided by the breeder to your vet and present it to the vet at the beginning of the first appointment.

Some puppies are sold with a written contract that calls for the new owner to have the puppy examined by the buyer's vet with the first 2-7 days after the pup has been placed. Regardless of whether you are contractually obligated to have your pup examined by a vet soon after you get her; it is a good idea to do so.

► **FIRST APPOINTMENT TIPS**

a) Do Fecal Check

It is a good idea to have your veterinarian do a fecal exam on the initial visit.

While your puppy may have been dewormed one or more times by the breeder, sometimes the stress of placement can awaken dormant stages of various intestinal parasites. Parasites can cause diarrhea, intestinal upset and a host of other problems.

b) Get Microchip

It is advisable to microchip your Berner pup if the breeder has not already done so. Your pup's veterinarian can implant a tiny rice sized microchip in your puppy so that if she should become lost there will be a greater chance of her being identified by either a veterinarian or by shelters that have scanners designed to read the digital number on the microchip. The microchip manufacturers maintain records on each registered microchip. A telephone call to the manufacturer can quickly provide the vet or shelter with the necessary owner contact information to reunite the stray dog and owner. There are several Microchip companies available including Avid and AKC's Home Again.

c) YOU & YOUR VET NEED TO KNOW...

A NUMBER OF BERNERS ARE IMMUNE SYSTEM CHALLENGED!

Notes on vaccines, heartworm & flea/tick medications

Do not over vaccinate/unnecessarily medicate a Berner puppy or dog. Berners with sensitive immune systems react negatively to the accumulation of vaccines, heartworm medications, flea and tick preventatives and insecticidal dips. Some vets give dogs vaccines and administer preventatives for fleas, ticks, and heartworm as a matter of routine in their efforts to safeguard pet's health.

Vaccines can protect dogs from serious illnesses by stimulating the dog's own system to produce antibodies that will protect the dog from life threatening illness if exposed to bacteria or viruses that cause diseases including distemper, parvo virus, hepatitis and rabies. But vaccines given too frequently or too many at a time can overwhelm some Bernese Mountain Dog's immune systems. Current studies have provided increasing documentation that over vaccination has been associated with harmful side effects.

The health status of any Berner and infectious disease risks should be considered in the selection of an appropriate vaccination program. Berner owners should consider

scheduling separate vet appointments for rabies and combo vaccines a few weeks to a month apart. Owners are encouraged to ask their pup's vet about titer testing which is an alternative method of managing the immunity status and vaccine administration. **NEW BERNER OWNERS - READ THIS!!!** Dr. Jean Dodds is a distinguished researcher who has addressed vaccine protocols. Dr. Dodds' Recommended Vaccination Schedule is available at <http://www.weim.net/emberweims/Vaccine.html>.

Use of preventatives like HeartGuard (ivermectin), or Advantage Plus (Imidacloprid Moxidectin) should be approached with common sense and caution. While flea (itchy skin, dermatitis) / tick (Lyme disease or Ehrlichiosis & others) / mosquito (Heartworm born illnesses can be debilitating or deadly, carefully consider your dog's risk factors. See more on Lyme disease at <http://workingdogs.com/doc0043.htm>. See more on Ehrlichiosis at <http://www.cvbd.org/3953.0.html>. See more on Heartworm at <http://www.heartwormsociety.org/article.asp?id=1141>. If your dog spends a lot of time outdoors in an area where fleas, mosquitoes or ticks are prevalent, administration of preventatives may be advisable. Ask your pup's breeder how they handle use of preventatives with their dogs. If your Berner comes from a family of dogs with a history of neurological disorders, epilepsy, seizures or dogs susceptible to or affected with immune dysfunction, immune-mediated disease, immune-reactions associated with vaccinations, or autoimmune disease or other health problems, adding Heartworm medication or other preventatives to the dog's system may negatively impact your dog's overall health. Annual testing for heartworm infection is recommended.

Be aware that **pre-surgery blood panels are advisable** due to bleeding disorders and other health conditions including kidney diseases and renal dysplasia found in the Bernese breed.

4) INVESTIGATE EMERGENCY VETERINARY CLINICS & SERVICES

A serious health crisis could develop with any puppy or adult Berner at any time.

Fortunately, emergency veterinary services are also available in some communities for after hour medical needs. Ask your vet if their clinic refers to a particular emergency clinic; and be sure to find out which emergency veterinary clinics and emergency vet services are available to you and your pup. Puppies do not have many physical reserves, can become dehydrated and may become critically ill more quickly than a fully mature adult dog. It is important that an owner be able to judge when a dog is in need of prompt or immediate veterinary care. Bloody or watery stools should be investigated promptly, or repeated incidents of diarrhea, repeated incidents of vomiting, inability to hold down food or water, listlessness, and extreme agitation or inability to get comfortable or debilitating injuries to joints or bones or serious wounds require prompt veterinary attention.

Please keep in mind that after hour emergency clinic services may be VERY expensive compared to veterinary services provided by your regular vet for procedures conducted during regular business hours.

