

## BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOGS – HEALTH

Individual Bernese Mountain Dogs can be affected by a variety of ailments that affect longevity and quality of life. Among the most common problems are cancer, autoimmune disorders, hip and elbow dysplasia, allergies, thyroid disorders, bowel disorders, torsion and bloat, eye disorders, cataracts, droopy eyes, and inverted eyelids. Veterinary treatment of health problems can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars in the course of a day or over a lifetime.

- ▶ Hip Dysplasia (one hip) \$1000-\$5000 for diagnosis and surgery
- ▶ Elbow Dysplasia (one elbow) \$1000-\$5000 for diagnosis and surgery
- ▶ Entropion \$1000-\$2000 for surgery to correct eyelid problem (can lead to blindness if left uncorrected, sometimes takes multiple surgeries)
- ▶ Bloat—stomach torsion \$1200.00-\$10,000.00 and more, and even death

**It is always best to inquire with individual breeders as to which health problems may be more or less prevalent in the families of dogs from which their breeding stock come.**

**LIFESPAN** The Swiss have a saying about the lifespan of Bernese Mountain Dogs. They say, 'three years a young dog, three years a good dog, three years an old dog... all else a gift from God'. At this time, the average age of a BMD at death is about 7 years. Berners can live as long as 14 years of age or more.

**The facts are:** No family of Bernese Mountain Dogs is free from health problems typically seen in the breed. No breeder can offer you a 100% guarantee that the pup you get will not face health challenges.

Many Berners can live long healthy lives. But, awareness of health issues by both breeders and owners is essential to enhance management and improve the quality of dogs' lives. Genetics and health are interlocked in many cases so breeder understanding of health issues that exist in families of Bernese is essential if improvements in health and soundness are to be made over generations of breeding.



**QUESTION:** How will you know the breeder you buy your puppy from is doing everything possible to select breeding pairs to minimize the occurrence of health problems?

**ANSWER:** Find out if the breeder you are working with conducts health and genetic testing on dogs they are using for breeding purposes. Find out if the breeder knows and cares about the health of puppies they placed with others – better breeders keep track of the dogs they produce.

If the breeder you are planning to purchase your Berner puppy from doesn't know about health registries and databases or doesn't mention health and genetic testing, ask yourself if that breeder is really focused on producing healthy puppies.

For more information on some of the most common health problems found in the Bernese Mountain Dog breed see the BMDCA's health pages at <http://www.bmdca.org/health/index.php>

[The Berner International Working Group](#) website provides a few up to date health articles and presentations related to understanding Bernese Mountain Dog health issues and their management. Internationally focused materials and resources on BMDs and other breeds health and welfare are located on [The International Partnership for Dogs website](#), [DogWellNet.com](http://DogWellNet.com) - be sure to check out the BMD page in the breeds database.

**AVOID DOING** Business with Any breeder who tells you: "Orthopedic clearances and genetic testing is only for SHOW DOGS."

Keep in mind the heartache and cost of owning a Berner that is affected by orthopedic conditions or inherited diseases – these problems affect pets as well as show dogs.

### Health Registries and Databases - Links

**Berner-Garde Foundation - BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG HEALTH database**

<http://www.bernergarde.org>

The Berner-Garde Foundation was established to collect, maintain and disseminate information about genetic diseases observed in the Bernese Mountain Dog. The database contains information which has been compiled over many years from voluntary submissions of data from owners and from other public sources of information, including the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) and the Canine Eye Registration Foundation (CERF). The information in the BGF database is now available online to owners, breeders, veterinarians and researchers who are working to reduce genetic disease in the Bernese Mountain Dog.

\* Submit health information on your Berner at <http://www.bernergarde.org/home/forms.aspx>

### CHIC

The Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) at <http://www.caninehealthinfo.org> is a centralized canine health database jointly sponsored by the AKC/Canine Health Foundation (AKC/CHF) at <http://www.akcchf.org/> and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) at <http://www.offa.org/>.

The purpose of CHIC is to encourage health testing and open sharing of all health testing results for inherited diseases and health conditions in dogs. Bernese breeders can potentially reduce the number of dogs who are affected by genetic diseases which impact the quality and length of Berners lives through collection and open sharing of health and genetic testing results. A Berner that has been issued a CHIC # has been tested for health and genetic screening tests defined by the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America. The BMDCA determined that the most important screening tests for Berners include an AKC DNA Profile, von Willebrand's Disease, Hip Dysplasia, Elbow Dysplasia, Eye Clearance, and Cardiac Clearance. Berners that have their results registered and made available in OFA are automatically issued CHIC numbers. NOTE: A Berner that has been issued a CHIC # can have a 'normal' or an 'abnormal' genetic test result for any or all tests done.

### **The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA)**

OFA website, phone, fax, mail, and email.

Business hours - 8:00 am to 4:30 pm CST.

Website: <http://www.offa.org/>

Phone Number: 573-442-0418

Fax Number: 573-875-5073

Mailing Address: 2300 E. Nifong Blvd., Columbia, MO 65201-3806

Email Address: [ofa@offa.org](mailto:ofa@offa.org)

OFA is a registry for keeping records of genetic testing pertaining to hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, cardiac, and thyroid. OFA issues certifications to dogs whose tests indicate the dog is not affected by a heritable disease or genetic defect.

- \* For OFA's description of hip dysplasia see: [http://www.offa.org/hd\\_info.html](http://www.offa.org/hd_info.html).
- \* OFA's hip dysplasia management recommendations for breeders are located at [http://www.offa.org/hd\\_guidelines.html](http://www.offa.org/hd_guidelines.html)DD.
- \* For OFA elbow dysplasia information see [http://www.offa.org/ed\\_types.html](http://www.offa.org/ed_types.html).
- \* OFA Hip and Elbow Application Forms are located at <http://www.offa.org/pdf/hdappbw.pdf>\*
- \* OFA Cardiac information can be located at [http://www.offa.org/cardiac\\_about.html](http://www.offa.org/cardiac_about.html).
- \* OFA Cardiac Application Form is found at [http://www.offa.org/pdf/cardapp\\_bw.pdf](http://www.offa.org/pdf/cardapp_bw.pdf)DD.
- \* For OFA Thyroid information see: [https://secure.offa.org/thy\\_info.html](https://secure.offa.org/thy_info.html).
- \* The OFA Thyroid Application is located at <https://secure.offa.org/pdf/thyappbw.pdf>.
- \* For OFA DM (Degenerative Myelopathy) information see <https://secure.offa.org/dnatesting/dm.html>\* '
- \* For OFA DM test kits see <https://secure.offa.org/cart.html>
- \* OFA DNA tests Application form is found at [https://secure.offa.org/pdf/dnaapp\\_bw.pdf](https://secure.offa.org/pdf/dnaapp_bw.pdf)\* '
- \* The OFA website contains a ratings comparison chart of hip grading systems that are used internationally at [http://www.offa.org/hd\\_grades.html](http://www.offa.org/hd_grades.html)

### **PennHIP**

Website: <http://www.pennhip.org/>. Operating out of the University of Pennsylvania, PennHIP offers another hip improvement program.

For more information see [http://www.pennhip.org/what\\_is\\_ph.html](http://www.pennhip.org/what_is_ph.html). To locate a veterinarian in your state that does PennHIP evaluations use the search tool located on PennHip's website at <http://www.pennhip.org/ReferralUSA.html>. To locate a PennHIP veterinarian in or outside the USA see <http://www.pennhip.org/locatevet.html>

### **VETGEN**

Website: <http://www.vetgen.com>

VETGEN provides Type I von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) Testing. For further explanation of Von Willebrand's Disease see articles at [http://www.bmdca.org/health/Genetics/Von\\_Willebrands\\_Disease.php](http://www.bmdca.org/health/Genetics/Von_Willebrands_Disease.php) and at <http://vetgen.com/canine-vwd1.html>.

- \* The VETGEN ORDER FORM is located at <http://www.vetgen.com/documents/order-form.pdf>.
- \* Note: The BMD Club of the Rockies always has an ongoing VetGen vWd Clinic
- \* See: <http://www.bmdcr.org/Shop-the-Rockies.html>

### **Michigan State University Endocrine Diagnostic Center - Thyroid Testing**

Website:

<http://www.animalhealth.msu.edu/Sections/Endocrinology/>

### **U of Missouri College of Veterinary Science - Degenerative Myelopathy Testing**

Website: <http://www.caninegeneticdiseases.net/DM/ancmntDM.htm>

- \* DM test kit is available from OFA, see <https://secure.offa.org/cart.html>

