



BMDCA Info Series

BMD Rescue & Rehome

2023 #15

Introduction ► As breeds gain popularity, the number of rescue situations usually increase, sometimes dramatically. Sadly, Bernese Mountain Dogs have not escaped this trend. A rapidly increasing number of people are drawn to the breed because of its striking appearance and extensive press that portrays the Bernese as “**the** perfect family dog” and “all around **ideal** canine companion.” While many potential buyers have educated themselves about Berners and will be wonderful and dependable owners, an alarming and growing number of others are woefully under-informed and/or unprepared for the commitment of dog ownership, especially of a large breed dog. Unforeseen situations can and do come up after a dog is brought into the home that make keeping the animal impossible (e.g., serious illness of the owner). The majority of reasons dogs are in need of rescue, however, could have been anticipated and avoided (e.g., family members prone to allergies, breed health and temperament issues, maintenance costs, grooming requirements, exercise needs, etc.). Responsible pet ownership requires an honest and factual assessment of whether a specific breed is right for you. Not all breeds fit all lifestyles. To help you understand whether a Berner is right for you, visit the BMDCA website. The **BMDCA Info Series** covers 29 topics written for those considering a Berner or who are new to the breed. (<https://www.bmdca.org/info-series>) BMDCA Breed Ambassadors are knowledgeable, experienced, and caring people who can and will answer your questions. (<https://www.bmdca.org/breed-ambassador>)

Definitions ► A “**rescue dog**” is a purebred Bernese Mountain Dog that has been placed in a shelter, is a stray, has been abandoned, or no longer can be cared for by the owner of record or caretaker. A “**rehomed**” dog is a purebred Bernese Mountain Dog that could no longer remain with its owner of record or caretaker and has been placed directly into a foster or permanent home. “**Placement**” is the process through which a dog is placed into a permanent home.

BMD Rescue: A Partnership of National and Regional Resources ► The BMDCA is devoted to preserving and protecting the breed. Rescue and rehoming are two ways this commitment is demonstrated. (<https://www.bmdca.org/rescue>) The BMDCA can’t do it alone, however. Rescue and rehoming work require a local as well as a national framework to be truly effective. The BMDCA and regional BMD clubs have joined forces to build and maintain a constant network of national support, information, and resources. In collaboration with BMDCA-recognized regional club rescue chairs, the BMDCA Rescue & Rehome efforts are focused on:

- Assisting in and coordinating rescue and rehoming needs throughout the BMD community. This may include providing limited financial support for rescue expenses, such as veterinary services after a dog has been rescued.
- Acting as a resource for rescue groups and owners dealing with Bernese Mountain Dogs. This includes maintaining an up-to-date listing of regional rescue contacts and providing a forum for exchange via the Bernese Rescue e-group list.
- Working with other BMDCA committees and regional BMD clubs to help educate the public about the breed, responsible breeding practices, and the peril that the breed faces from puppy millers, back yard breeders, those promoting and selling “designer”/mixed breed dogs, and others. This includes maintaining an advertising program that directs puppy buyers to health and temperament-conscious fanciers and away from those who seek only financial profit from the breed.
- Seeking assistance for placement and/or monetary support from breeders and/or stud dog owners of record if dogs they have produced are found in a rescue situation.
- Raising funds and encouraging donations for rescue and rehoming efforts.

At the local level, the regional clubs help in some of the efforts just described and provide invaluable services such as:

- Continuing the breed education process on a day-to-day, person-to-person basis with the goal of reducing the number of dogs requiring rescue/rehoming in the future.
- Supporting and counseling owners as they encounter dog-care issues or have questions, so each Berner receives the best care possible and remains a loved and viable member of the family.
- Maintaining contacts in their local region so that clubs are notified when Berners are received in shelters, found as strays, or otherwise in need of assistance.
- Requiring the spaying and neutering of pets to lower the population of unplanned puppies and unwanted dogs.
- Rescuing Berners in need and placing them in new homes with a high probability of success.

Bernese Mountain Dogs in need of new homes are rehomed by the regional clubs. While each regional club has its own adoption process, generally you should expect to:

- fill out an adoption application;
- be interviewed, sometimes by more than one rescue representative — this may occur when an adoption application is filed or when a dog is available for placement;
- provide references, and possibly have a home check for suitability;
- maintain an ongoing relationship with the Rescue/Rehome

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Committee after placement so the transition is smooth and the dog's progress can be monitored;

- be required to return the dog to the placing club if, at any time, you are not able to keep the dog for any reason.

If the club has a Berner in need of a home, the rescue representatives will review the applications on file and try to find the best match for that particular dog. While all clubs receive many wonderful applications, not all situations are conducive to a successful match. Many rescue dogs have issues that require special homes to meet their needs.

FAQs About BMD Rescue ►

- **Where do most of the Berners requiring rescue come from?** Most Berners requiring rehoming come from owners who are no longer able to care for them because of changing life circumstances or issues with the dog's health or behavior.
- **How long will I have to wait for a rescue Berner?** This is a tough question to answer. While the number is growing, situations where Berners require rescue are still somewhat infrequent. But, in some areas of the country the number of Berners requiring rescue has increased dramatically in recent years. Thus your wait could be very long or you may never be called. Nevertheless, we encourage you to fill out an adoption application if you think a rescue dog might be right for you. We never know what tomorrow will bring and are always looking for just the right match for each dog. In addition to working through the regional BMD club closest to you, you can expand your search to include:
 - BMD breeders – Most Berners in need of new homes are rehomed by their breeders.
 - Regional BMD clubs outside of your area – While most clubs would prefer local placements, at times they may consider homes outside of their region. For regional BMD club links go to www.bmdca.org.
 - Your local shelter;
 - Internet sites listing pets available for adoption – www.Petfinder.org, <http://www.adoptapet.com/>, www.pets911.com
- Bernese Auction Rescue Coalition - *BARC, Inc.* – a nonprofit corporation dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating Berners from dog brokers, dog auctions, puppy mills, pet shops, and any other dangerous, exploitative, or abusive situations. www.barcinc.net/
- **Can I get a puppy through rescue/rehome?** Dogs younger than two rarely come into the rescue program.
- **Can I breed my rescue/rehome dog?** All clubs require that all rescue/rehomed dogs be spayed or neutered.
- **Can I show my rescue/rehome dog?** Since most rescue/rehomed dogs do not come with AKC registration they are ineligible for conformation competition. Spayed or neutered AKC registered dogs can be shown in veterans conformation classes and AKC working events. If the new owner of a purebred dog wants to compete in working events such as obedience, agility, rally, and draft, application can be made for an AKC ILP (**Indefinite Listing Privilege**).
- **How do adult Berners adapt to their new homes and families?** Adult Bernese are very loyal to their humans, yet do surprisingly well in new homes. The bonding time can

take a while — easily 3 months to a year — but generally they begin to settle into the routine within a month.

- **I don't have time/energy for a puppy. Is an adult rescue/rehome dog a better choice for me?** Not necessarily. Many rescue Berners have little or no training and/or have behavioral issues that require the same amount of vigilance that a puppy requires. In general, the careful supervision needed for a smooth transition is less for an adult rescue dog, but it is still necessary. Adults require the same amount of planning and care that a puppy does. Your new adult dog will need to learn the rules of your home. This is best accomplished in the beginning with good supervision and containment. An unsupervised adult dog that does not know the rules of the house can do much more damage than a pup. A lot of early guidance and positive feedback will help your dog adjust more quickly.
- **Berners are so expensive. Can I get one cheaper through a rescue program?** Most clubs require an adoption fee. The amount can vary from \$500- \$1,000 depending on the age, health, and circumstances of the dog. This is much lower than the purchase price of a puppy, but all dogs require basic living expenses and health care. Berners can suffer from many different health issues that can be expensive over the lifetime of the dog. Although a rescue/rehome dog may be less expensive to obtain, the ongoing costs associated with its care will mirror those associated with the breed. If you cannot afford a puppy, it is likely that you cannot afford the lifetime expenses of a Berner.

Do you rescue/rehome Berner mixes such "Bernerdoodles"?

Beware of those who sell so called "designer dogs" with claims that these mixes offer the best of both breeds. Responsible BMD breeders will not sell breeding stock to those who wish to create mixed breeds. The health and temperament backgrounds of mixed breeds are unknown and combining the existing BMD health issues with those of another breed increases the potential for additional genetic issues.

Concluding Thoughts ► The goal of any dog rescue program is to become extinct because there are no longer dogs in need of help. Until that day comes, please understand the requirements of responsible dog ownership. Carefully research the breeds in which you are interested. Be savvy and educated, especially when looking for a puppy. Work with responsible BMDCA member breeders, not puppy mills or pet stores. Responsible member breeders will give you and your Berner life-long support and be there to answer your questions.



Beyla...
lost her eye from a broken wire in her cage at a puppy mill. She went on to lead a great life and even became a therapy dog.

Brody...
hit by a car, incurred a severely fractured femur, and taken to a local shelter. Chipped but unclaimed. Rescued, underwent surgery. Today he is happy and energetic with an adoring family.

