

Helpful hints for puppy buyers when contacting breeders

- Do your homework BEFORE you start contacting breeders. The more informed and knowledgeable you are about the breed, the more confidence a breeder will have in you.
- Be courteous, but persistent. One of the biggest complaints is that breeders don't respond to emails or phone messages. Most breeders do not run kennels as a profession – they usually have a full time job outside the home. When they get home from work, they still have to tend to their families, both the two and the four legged variety. Then they are faced with responding to puppy requests. If you are phoning long distance, or if the breeder thinks you may only be making a casual inquiry, they may not respond, so be persistent. It may take several phone calls/emails to make contact. If you don't get a return call from a breeder, call them again at different times (However, don't call too late in the evening – after 9:00pm is probably too late to call).
- Don't send out a "shotgun" email to every breeder on your list.
- Don't begin the conversation with "Do you have any puppies for sale?" Instead, introduce yourself and where you live, explain how you found them (breeder referral, etc.), and ask if they have a few moments to talk to you about berners. You will find out soon enough about puppies.
- Be prepared to be asked a lot of questions and/or complete an extensive questionnaire. A breeder may come across as suspicious, or brusque, or even rude about your desire to become a berner owner. Try not to be offended or take this attitude personally. There is a HUGE demand for berner pups, but not all those who want these dogs are suitable. The breed has taken on a certain "trophy" status. Responsible breeders have a big financial and emotional investment in their pups, and want to make sure they go to the best homes possible, not to those whose primary interest in the breed is to be used as some sort of status symbol. Also, sadly some buyers misrepresent themselves as pet owners when their real interest is in acquiring breeding dogs for money making purposes. Good breeders are committed to making the best placement possible, and sometimes this process results in hurt feelings. This explanation is not meant to absolve bad behaviour on the part of some breeders. Ideally, you will establish a relationship with your breeder which will last at least over the course of your dog's life, and probably longer. If you aren't comfortable with the way you are being treated, move on. There are other breeders out there.
- Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater! Don't condemn the entire ethical breeding community if you have a bad experience, or use this to justify buying from a bad breeder who is a nice sales person.
- Puppies aren't available "on demand." It could take you several months to find a pup. Be patient.
- Some breeders operate on certain absolutes, such as "must have a fenced yard," etc. If a particular breeder won't sell you a pup because you don't meet their criteria, don't get discouraged. Many, many first time berner owners have been turned down at least once (I was turned down by three breeders 😊). Again, there are other breeders out there.
- If this is your first berner, very few breeders will sell you a pup if you want to breed. You need to acquire years of experience with the breed in order to be educated enough to take on the challenge of breeding. "Just one litter" for the kids is what we refer to as a "backyard breeder." Wanting another puppy "just like Fluffy" is voodoo genetics. Do your children all look and act exactly like you, or each other? Same with dogs.

If berner breeders (and owners, for that matter) sometimes come across as being overprotective of our dogs, bear in mind that our beloved breed has been the victim of horrific exploitation in recent years. We are reacting – and in some cases, overreacting – in an effort to prevent future exploitation. If we occasionally lose our perspective, we hope you will understand and not take our concerns personally.

Hopefully, this will assist you in finding the right breeder.