

Puppy Care Information Sheet

1. All supplies should have been bought and the home prepared before the puppy arrives home. A letter regarding “puppy preparedness” should have been received by buyers 2 weeks prior to puppy’s arrival.
2. The first question people ask is “how much food do I feed my puppy?” Being that litters eat differently than single puppies, it is not something that the breeder is able to measure. Our advice to you is that you start with about ½ - ¾ cup puppy food three times a day. If you notice that your puppy is finishing his/her food and searching for more, increase the amount until the pup seems satisfied. It usually takes anywhere from 5 – 15 min. for puppies to eat. If there is any food left over after 15 min., remove the dish and offer about what was eaten at the next meal. **DO NOT ALLOW A BERNESE TO FREE FEED, OR TO EAT MANY SCRAPS and TREATS.** The eyes that captivated your heart are USED to get more food than what they really need. Feeding is the most essential element in turning out a healthy dog. If a Berner puts weight on too quickly, you can be sure of bone problems later on. It is not recommended that your dog be starved, but he/she should look a little lean. That big, muscular dog that you can’t wait to have needs to be put off to the future when he/she is around 5 years old. Be sure to feel your puppy regularly for an accurate assessment of his weight. Fur is deceiving! Run your hands along the rib cage and you should feel ribs, but they should NOT be boney! Next feel that tell tale tummy. It should be nice and tight and not sag. Your Berner will continue to increase the amount of food it eats until maxing out at between 4 – 8 cups a day. Don’t aim for the 8 cups...that is the exception. Depending on the activity level and make up of you dog, the average is 4.5 cups a day for an adolescent. Never feed a Berner all food at one meal, as they will engorge themselves and be prone to bloat which is deadly. Continue this pattern of feeding and you should not have an issue with weight. You may reduce the amount of feedings to two times daily when they are around 4 months old. Remember from all your reading that you should never feed a dog after heavy exercise or drinking a large amount of water. Again, bloat is the concern. Most people want to know what the right food is. There are a variety of very good foods out there right now. I personally aim for a food that is AAFCO approved, Holistic, Wheat/Soy/Corn free, and has the correct balance of protein/calcium/phosphorous. It used to be a fact that puppy food was too high in protein and thus caused the pups to grow too quickly, but that is beginning to change. A large breed puppy food can be fed till they are 1 year old, and then move over to adult food. Do not use any food that is greater than 25% protein for a developing puppy. Some all life stage foods are okay, but a correctly balanced puppy food is preferred. I have used Taste of the Wild, Pacific Stream formula with success for most of my dogs, but some of them have had to be taken off of it. Again, you must find what works for YOUR dog. An example of things to look at: Too high of protein can cause your puppy to grow too quickly, and too low of protein can cause urinary tract problems. You and I could eat the exact same diet and process it differently, so can dogs. We have to find what works for each individual. The good thing is that there are good choices out there. But, be careful to READ about the food and look at the ingredients. Just like people food.... Good marketing does not make it healthy.

Foods that I have liked include: Innova, Holistic Select, Solid Gold, Taste of the Wild, Nutro Naturals. Remember that each of these brands has different recipes and that you still have to look at the ingredient list.

3. Supplements. Everybody seems to want to add lots of wonderful things to boring dry dog food. Don’t fall into that trap. We recommend a few supplements only. Ester C should be added to one meal a day (preferably the AM feeding). This will be the first introduction to Vit. C so go gently. Split a 500mg tab in half and crush it to powder. Add 250mg in AM feeding and 250mg to PM feeding. Do this for about a week checking for loose stool. If this is not an issue you can do the whole 500mg at one meal. When your puppy is tolerating this well, you may increase to 500mg am & pm. Although the dog food you will be feeding has Glucosamine/Chondroitin in it, I still

nufactures directions. I also give Salmon oil. Grizzly Salmon Oil and Sea Pet are two brands that I like. This is high in Omega 3 & 6 and is better digested than flax oil for dogs. Do supplement with fresh veges, raw bones, and fruit. These add a wonderful variety of flavor and nutrients to your dogs diet and just like in us...they help us fight cancer☺! (Well....I don't know that bone fights cancer, but it does keep the dentist bill down.

4. **CAUTION.** Parks are prime places for your puppy to pick up diseases especially Parvo. Puppies are particularly susceptible to this disease as it attacks the growing cells in the digestive track. While your puppy will be vaccinated for this virus prior to leaving my home, it does not imply full immunity. Some veterinarians recommend that you do not take your puppy to a park of any kind until they are at least 6 months old. Use your own best judgment, but be aware of the dangers.
5. **Exercise.** This is the other critical issue. Your puppy must NOT be allowed to jump from high places for at least 2 years (i.e.: back of pick-ups, off of retaining walls, picnic tables, DOG HOUSES or anything else that they decide looks like tons of fun to fly off of. Their growth plates will be damaged. As far as walking and running, try to keep the puppy on grassy or dirt paths. Just like concrete and asphalt is hard on our joints, it is hard on theirs too. A puppy should NEVER run more than its own set pace. They will make good jogging partners after they are two years of age. Carefully monitor how much a puppy plays with other dogs as they can twist, turn, and pound on their joints. The puppies will set their own pace for play. Remember that people are their favorite things, so if you encourage them to keep playing they will, but try to let them rest when you see them tiring out.

Another popular activity is taking a puppy to a dog park. I advice against it. Besides the risk of disease, you put your puppy at risk from other dogs. Your dog will learn to react in one of two ways: 1) shy and hide behind you for security, or 2) show aggressive behavior to protect him/herself from over bearing dogs. Let your puppy mature with you being the playmate and you being the safe guard. Expose him/her to other dogs/people, but only where you can control the situation. Your dog should develop confidence and stability with maturity and then can play with other dogs that have been taught the same good manners. But, even adult dogs need to be introduced to each other on a leash first and make sure that no signs of aggression are noted before they get to "play."

6. **Love.** You can't give enough and you can't spoil with love☺. Enjoy...don't let the worry take out the fun of owning a Berner!

I can't possibly cover every issue here, so **READ** up on your breed, visit with other owners, and keep in touch with your breeder.

- 6. The rest is basic care covered in the flyers I have included in this pack, and in your books. Please remember FOR NO REASON LEAVE A DOG IN A CAR UNATTENDED. I can't tell you the numerous horror stories I have read and seen for myself.**
- 7. More than anything else enjoy your puppy. Love him/her and meet her needs. He/she will pay you back with a lifetime of loyalty and love.**