Welcome
to the
Saint Bernard

Congratulations on your new companion, the Saint Bernard! The Saint Bernard Club of America welcomes you to the wonderful world of Saints, and hopes to help you enjoy your new pet by providing some basic information about Saint Bernard dogs. Read on, and feel free to contact us for more information, or to join our club.

Breed Facts

* There is no preferred coat type. Both long-haired and short-haired Saint Bernards shed and need regular baths and grooming.

Breed History

The Saint Bernard dog was first pictured in 1695, by an unknown painter. Until that time, there were no records of dogs at the famous Hospice in Switzerland, and it is generally believed that the dogs that eventually were called the Saint Bernard were bred from dogs previously existing in the Swiss countryside. The original Saint Bernard was a short-haired dog and was introduced to the Hospice as a guard dog, as a carting dog, and to work in the kitchens turning a spit. The lifesaving abilities of the Saint Bernard were recorded in the years 1787 to 1800. From 1800 to 1812, the most famous and most honored dog known in history, Barry, lived and worked at the Hospice. His deeds have been recounted in many books. He saved the lives of some 40 people and, having been retired, died in Bern in 1814, where he can be seen today in the Museum of Natural History.

Today's Saint Bernard makes an excellent companion and loyal family pet. Some are still used for various purposes to assist in man's daily life.

* All colors of the Saint Bernard, from deep brown to brown-yellow, are of equal value.

* Necessary markings are: white chest, feet, tip of tail, noseband, and collar or spot on the nape; the latter and a blaze between the eyes are very desirable. Faulty are all other colors except the favorite dark shadings on the head (mask) and ears. Monk's caps are cute but of no value. Freckles are discouraged.

* At times, a Saint Bernard may drool. There is no such thing as a dry mouth Saint.

* Saint Bernards usually weigh somewhere between 130 and 180 pounds.

Daily Care

Saint Bernards need a proper diet, regular medical care including yearly vaccinations, and basic obedience training. Young puppies should not be allowed to get too fat and should not have forced exercise until they reach adult size.

Regular brushing will keep the coat clean and free from mats and tangles, and bathing should be done on a regular basis. Include regular toenail clipping and ear cleaning, as well as regular checks of the dog's teeth.

All Saint Bernards should be kept in a fenced yard or kennel, walked on a lead, and never allowed to run free. Crate training is recommended and is especially useful during the house-breaking phase.

Training

Basic obedience training is a must for the Saint Bernard. They grow to be a very large dog and must learn not to jump on people, knock into small children, steal food from the table, and otherwise take advantage of their size. This training is best started when your Saint Bernard is a puppy, and many local dog clubs offer puppy kindergarten classes.
Saint Bernards are very intelligent and can be trained for competition as well as general good behavior. Some of the competitive activities you and your Saint might enjoy are: conformation shows, obedience shows, cart pulling, and weight pulling.

A well trained Saint Bernard will make a wonderful companion for you and your family, and you will enjoy each other for many years.

Spay/Neuter

As an organization dedicated to the welfare of the Saint Bernard, the Saint Bernard Club of America is very concerned that so many dogs are abandoned or dumped in animal shelters. Saint Bernard puppies are often "impulse" buys because they are very cute, and previous movies have shown them to be a very intelligent pet. However, the Saint Bernard is not for everyone. Why not? To put it briefly, drool, hair, large quantities of food (and subsequent waste), and the sheer amount of space they physically require.

The undertaking of dog breeding is a serious responsibility. A Breed Standard for the Saint Bernard has been developed and is an approved, written description of the correct appearance for this breed. Responsible, knowledgeable breeders use this Standard to produce quality Saint Bernards. Saint Bernards that are found to deviate to some extent from the Standard in size, markings, temperament, or that have known hereditary defects, are not considered or used by responsible breeders to produce puppies.

Responsible Saint Bernard breeders strongly recommend that you spay or neuter your pet Saint Bernard. Most responsible breeders require this by selling their Saint puppies with spay/neuter contracts or by use of the AKC's Limited Registration option. There are numerous reasons for this recommendation:

1. Neutered animals are usually healthier and live longer than unaltered animals. They usually make happier pets as well.

2. Veterinarians, breeders and animal behaviorists all agree that IT IS NOT AT ALL HELPFUL OR FULFILLING FOR THE FEMALE DOG TO HAVE PUPPIES. Having puppies is a major physical occurrence for a female dog, and even under ideal circumstances it can lead to serious health problems and sometimes death.

3. Spaying a female dog before her first heat cycle greatly reduces her chances of mammary tumors later on. Spayed females are free from the danger of uterine infections, which can be life threatening. Neutered males do not normally develop testicular cancer and have a much lower susceptibility to developing prostate problems. Neutered males are usually more tolerant to other male dogs as well.

4. Spaying or neutering will not turn your Saint Bernard into a fat and lazy dog. Obesity, caused by giving your dog too many treats and too little exercise, will.

5. The American Kennel Club permits dogs that have been spayed or neutered to participate in all phases of obedience, tracking, and agility competitions. Only animals that are capable of reproducing are able to be shown in conformation shows.

Breeding

Breeding Saint Bernards requires much study, patience, and good veterinary care in order to produce a quality litter of puppies. The female dog should not be bred until she is about two years old, has been checked for any hereditary problems, and is declared to be in good health. The same is true for the stud dog. Both the female and male should be registered with the American Kennel Club so the litter and individual puppies can also be registered. Female dogs carry their puppies for 63 days. A proper whelping area for the birth is necessary. Sometimes, a Caesarian birth is required. Puppies should not be removed from the mother or sold until at least 7 weeks of age. Before selling the puppies, they must have their dewclaws removed, get started on their puppy shots, fed a good quality dog food, and the prospective buyers must be screened. Responsible breeders promise to take back any puppy that develops a health problem.

Some owners are tempted to breed Saint Bernards in a misguided attempt to make a profit. If you are able to make a profit breeding and selling Saint Bernards, you are probably not doing it with the concern and care that should be exercised.

'Fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants' breeding of Saint Bernards is usually not beneficial to the breed and is very often harmful. Responsible breeding is done by experienced, knowledgeable persons using quality Saint Bernards, with the goal being the improvement of the breed. Careless and uninformed breeding only harms and dilutes the wonderful characteristics we value most in the noble Saint Bernard.

About the SBCA

The Saint Bernard Club of America (SBCA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the welfare of the Saint Bernard breed. It encourages the ownership, selective breeding, showing, and training of purebred Saint Bernards. The club was organized in 1888, making it one of the oldest breed clubs in the United States. Reorganization and recognition by the American Kennel Club occurred in 1898.

More Information

http://www.akc.org/clubs/saints

Visit the SBCA’s site while surfing the net. View links to other sites, including Saint Bernard rescue.

Send for more information:

The Saint Bernard Classic, by Albert de la Rie: $21.50
Basic Care and Basic Care II: $ 3.00

General information (postage donation welcome)
Send request to: Marilyn Santell, Corresponding Secretary
735 G.P. Easterly N.E., Cortland, OH 44410