

Education Manual for the Belgian Sheepdog Puppy Buyer

Bringing a Belgian Sheepdog into your life is a delightful experience. You are in for some new and fun experiences. Never underestimate - and never fail to appreciate! - a Belgian's intelligence and intuitiveness.

This manual contains information compiled by members of the Education Committee of the Belgian Sheepdog Club of America. While this manual is not a comprehensive technical guide, we feel that the combined years of experience and insight from these members will help you to better understand and enjoy your new Belgian. You may have questions about topics not covered by this manual and, certainly, there will always be new lessons to be learned, so the education committee urges you to develop and maintain open communication and a good working relationship with your breeder, a quality veterinarian, and with other Belgian owners. These contacts will afford you experience and resources to draw on throughout your dog's life.

We also encourage you to join your local, as well as national, breed club to continue the process of education begun by this manual.

BSCA Education Committee
Ann Kozel – Chair

The Belgian Sheepdog Club of America

Membership in the Belgian Sheepdog Club of America is open to all Belgian owners, enthusiasts and supporters, 18 years old or older.* Ask your breeder for a membership application. Included in your membership are voting rights and subscription in the Belgian Sheepdog Magazine which is mailed out to the membership six times a year.

(*Junior Membership - age 12 - 17)

Contents	Page
New Home Adjustment - Advance Preparation	3
Crate Training and Housebreaking	5
New Home Adjustment – Settling In	6
Introduction to other Animals	6
Introduction to Children and Others	6
Socialization / Exposure to New Things	7
Registering Your Puppy	8
Taking Care of Your Belgian	8
Choosing a Vet	8
Teeth and Gum Care	9
Feeding Your Puppy	9
Spaying and Neutering	10
Anesthesia	10
Coat Care	11
Nail and Foot Care	11
Grooming Tools	12
Training	13
Early Training	13
Puppy Kindergarten	13
Training Guides	14
Canine Activities	14
Conformation	14
Obedience	14
Canine Good Citizen	15
Therapy Dog International	15
Agility	15
Tracking	15
Herding	15
Flyball	15
Temperament Testing	15
Schutzhund	15
French Ring Sport	15
Where to Get More Information About Canine Activities	16
The Official Breed Standard of the Belgian Sheepdog	16
Belgian Sheepdog Rescue	19

New Home Adjustment - Advance Preparation

The arrival of a new puppy is an exciting time! Both you and the puppy are in for some major lifestyle adjustments. To make the transition easier and happier, here are a few things that you and your whole family can do *before* the puppy comes home.

Select a name. Remember, your puppy will be a member of your family, so it's helpful to pick a name that everyone in your family is comfortable with calling and hearing for years to come. Choosing a name in advance will help your puppy begin learning right away.

Prepare your home. "Puppy-proof" all the areas in which the puppy will be allowed. Puppies are endlessly curious, so prepare much as you would for the arrival of an inquisitive toddler. Hazards to puppies include: poisons, electric cords, small, loose and/or detachable items that the puppy could swallow or choke on, poisonous plants (Philodendron, English Ivy, Deffenbachia to name a few). Move any family treasures that can be knocked over or chewed on to a safe place. Get down on puppy eye level to see what they will see. Do not rely on your own watchfulness. Your attention will wander and it only takes a few moments for these little investigators to get into trouble.

Adjust your schedule. It's very helpful if you can arrange your schedule to spend as much time as possible with your new Belgian puppy for the first days to a week. If at all possible, don't arrange for your puppy to come home if you're going to have a houseful of holiday guests - the puppy will get lost in the shuffle, and is likely to get overwhelmed by the commotion.

Purchase a crate. Actually, you may choose to purchase more than one crate. A small crate that's not much bigger than your puppy works better for housebreaking, but you can achieve the same effect by blocking off part of a larger crate. If you plan on crating your dog for extended periods of time, you may choose to buy an extra-large crate for those times. It's also handy to have two types of kennels one for the car and one that you keep set up at home.

Which Kind of Crate Should You Buy?

Airline Crates are made of plastic, and create a more secure, "den-like" atmosphere. This is the crate you must use for flying your dog, and it can be used for both housebreaking, and home crating. It can, however, be a bit bulky for local travel. Size designations are 200, 300, 400, etc. An adult Belgian usually requires a size 400-500 airline crate.

Metal Folding Crates are made of closely-spaced metal bars which allow for greater air circulation. You can use this type of crate, which folds easily to fit into a back-seat or trunk, for house-breaking, home crating and local travel. Choose from many different sizes and weights, and either plain metal or enamel coated.

Select a place for your puppy's crate. It's good for puppy development to be near the family and activity centers of the home. This assures constant conditioning to the sounds and hubbub of a busy household. Ideally, choose a space or a corner the puppy can call its own for an extended time, and from which it can see and hear what's going on, but still feel secure.

Establish your puppy's exercise area. Decide where you want your puppy to exercise and eliminate. Establishing the puppy's "bathroom" area at its first elimination at your home is an important step in housebreaking. The puppy will get the idea faster when you take it back to that area. Remember, you are going to be making frequent trips to this area rain or shine, sleet or snow, so don't choose the back forty.

Prepare for a new puppy much as you would for the arrival of an inquisitive toddler.

Also, determine what your family will call this act. Teaching the puppy a command for elimination will help it to focus on the act when you exercise it now, and for its whole life. Keep the command simple and short. Commonly used phrases include "Go potty" and "hurry up." Make sure that everyone who takes the puppy out says the same thing. Praise the puppy in a high-pitched happy tone when it eliminates. Don't feel foolish over such a display it will pay off in the end.

Arrange for veterinary care. Choose a veterinarian and make an appointment for the puppy's physical exam within the first few days after it comes to live with you. Be sure to obtain from your breeder immunization records and any other health information pertaining to your puppy.

OK, now you are ready for the puppy to come home!

Puppy Gear

All the "stuff" your puppy needs to start getting settled in right away!

Toys: chew toys, tennis balls, squeak toys, stuffed animals, etc.

Crate (see crate training section for more info.)

Bowls: for food and water.

Collars: an everyday collar that can slip off the puppy's head to prevent choking and a training collar as recommended by your puppy kindergarten or obedience trainer. Never leave your puppy in a crate with any kind of collar.

Leashes:

- a standard 6 foot, half-inch wide leash made of leather or nylon webbing.

- a Flexi-Lead, an absolutely wonderful retractable lead that can release up to 26 feet or more of lead at the push of a button. You can control the amount and speed that the Flexi releases, allowing for both additional freedom of movement and safety for your dog. This type of leash is great for long walks and can be a useful training tool.

Crate Training and Housebreaking

Crate training is essential for puppies. With proper training and encouragement, the crate will become your puppy's den, a safe haven and a means of safe transport.

Crate training is also the fastest path to housebreaking as puppies generally don't want to soil their sleeping and/or eating area. Capitalize on this by confining the puppy on a periodic basis and then taking it right out to the "puppy bathroom" as soon as you let it out of the crate. If the puppy has been napping, take it out right away once it wakes up because it will want to eliminate. Some people feed the puppy in the crate, let it take a little nap, and then carry it out to the exercise area. Once the puppy has eliminated, let it back into the house for supervised play. This is generally a safe time for avoiding accidents in the house, but be prepared to clean up just in case.

If the puppy has an accident, correct it with a gentle shake by its ruff and/or stern "No!" Never hit the puppy. You don't have to scream at it. Do not correct the puppy unless you catch it in the act - not one minute later. Timing of corrections and praise is everything if you want the puppy to get the message!

More About Crate Training and Housebreaking

The first goal of crate training is to get the puppy to like its crate. Your puppy may have gotten its initial exposure to a crate from its breeder, and may be comfortable in a one when you bring it home. Keep reinforcing those good feelings about the crate.

To get your puppy into its crate, use a place command such as "Kennel," or "Go to your crate." This command is very useful anytime you want your dog to go into anything in the future.

Do not call the puppy to you to put it in the crate, or it may become wary of approaching when called. Instead, lure the puppy to its crate with a treat or kibble. Whenever the puppy does go into the crate, give it praise and an especially tasty treat.

Praise the puppy and periodically give it treats while it's inside the crate. Place treats or a favorite chew toy in the crate so the puppy will be rewarded for going into the crate periodically on its own.

Accustom the puppy to short periods of confinement, all the while giving treats through the gate, then open the gate. Repeat this many times over. Say the command, "Kennel" - lure - treat - close gate - treat/treat - open gate. Your puppy should learn that confinement is for a short, good time.

Gradually extend the length of time the puppy remains in the crate. This may take a day or two, but sometimes takes longer.

Once your puppy has accepted the crate as a place of comfort and can settle in for short

naps, then it can be used as for confinement and as an aid to housebreaking.

Start housebreaking your puppy as soon as you get home. Do not let it roam the house until it has eliminated in the designated puppy exercise area.

Be consistent about the puppy' s food and feeding schedule. Feeding the puppy at the same times each day will help train its gastrointestinal tract, as a puppy usually has to defecate shortly after eating.

New Home Adjustment – Settling In

Introducing Your Puppy To Other Animals

How you introduce your puppy to other animals is highly individual, but remember, safety and a positive outcome are the goals.

A good way to apprise the situation is to let the puppy and another animal sniff each other through a barrier such as a kid gate. If there are tail wags and enthusiasm all around then a little closer inspection is called for. Still, make sure you have control of the introducees - having each on a leash is a good way to achieve that objective. Praise each for good behavior, stay calm and talk in happy tones. The body language and posturing of both parties should clue you in to how things are going. Personalities and size differences of the puppy and the other animal are major considerations for ongoing observation and supervision of play as your puppy melds into the family. Consult your breeder if you anticipate any difficulty.

Always walk your puppy on a leash in an unsecured area such as a neighborhood to avoid disastrous encounters that could affect the puppy for its entire life.

Introducing Your Puppy To Children and Others

As a rule, children and puppies are drawn to each other like magnets. It' s your job to make sure the experience is a positive one for both these little ones. Introduce them at a distance and then allow closer and closer encounters depending on how they respond to each other. This may move along quite rapidly. Watch body language and responses from both child and puppy. Do not allow either to get stressed or out of control from excitement.

Establish clear rules for how the children are allowed to handle the puppy. Show children who are old enough, the best way to pick up a puppy (supporting all parts). Do not let a toddler try to carry a puppy. Supervise some on-lap holding for that "close to me" feeling little children want.

During puppyhood, it' s important for your puppy to have numerous exposures to different people in controlled situations. Invite people over to play with the puppy on a regular basis. Enroll your puppy in a Puppy Class at your local training club. Take your puppy for short, fun trips (not just to the vet) in the car weekly. Expose your puppy on a regular

basis to new and different surroundings. Take food treats with you and make it as much fun as you can for the puppy. Be vigilant in avoiding negative encounters with other dogs or people. The time you spend with this kind of exposure in puppyhood will pay off in a dog that's well-adjusted and adaptable for the rest of its life.

Socialization

Socialization begins in the whelping box. During the first weeks of life, the breeder handles each puppy one or two times a day. Studies have shown that early environmental influences, such as positive brief handling can have profound and enduring effects on behavior.

Most breeders feel it essential to expose a three to six month old puppy to new situations, as long as the exposure is done in a careful and controlled manner and is fun for the puppy. Belgian puppies are quick to learn everything and seem especially prone to never forget a bad experience, so be careful with them.

Even with good socialization, what might be called an environmental, or situational fear can emerge at different phases in a puppy's life. Some breeders feel this is around the 16 to 20 week mark. The puppy may exhibit fear of an unfamiliar place, or even fear in a familiar place that is somehow altered. Usually puppies pass through this stage just fine - in some it's never really apparent. It seems that if puppies experience something extremely unpleasant during one of these sensitive fear periods, they may be permanently traumatized or require a good deal of gentle handling and desensitization in order to get them over their fear.

Teaching bite inhibition is an important part of puppy socialization, and can be taught at a very young age. It starts in the whelping box when puppies learn from their littermates the difference between a play bite and a more serious one that hurts. Most breeders continue this process in their interaction with puppies. Some breeders discourage any mouthing by puppies at all, while others allow mouthing and play biting but teach the dog limits through gentle reprimands and a loud "Ouch!" Belgians are very smart and quickly get the idea. Gently shaking the puppy by the ruff along with the reprimand gets the message through just fine - hitting the puppy is never appropriate.

Registering Your Puppy with the American Kennel Club

At the time of purchase, your breeder should provide you with an American Kennel Club (AKC) Registration Application form. This document, is the means of transferring ownership and registering the puppy in your name with the AKC. Your breeder will complete most sections of this form including:

- Sex of dog
- Color and markings of dog
- Registration Type (Full or Limited)
- Transfer date
- Name and address of all new owners and co-owners
- Signatures of all litter owners if multiple

The new owner of the dog must fill out the following:

- Name of dog
- Signatures of all owners and co-owners
- Payment information
- Registration Options

With a limited registration, the dog is eligible to compete in all AKC events except conformation. No offspring produced by this dog would be eligible for AKC registration. Most puppies placed in non-show homes are sold on a limited registration basis with the understanding that they will be neutered or spayed. Sometimes papers are withheld until the dog is spayed or neutered. Limited registration doesn't make your puppy any less a purebred -- it just means the breeder has not designated the dog as breeding stock. Only the breeder of the litter can change limited registration to full registration.

In order to register your puppy with the AKC, you must complete your portions of the Registration Application and send the registration fee to the AKC. The address of the AKC and the most current registration fee are indicated on the Registration Application. There is also an option for on-line registration application that is available if the breeder of the litter initiates the process. For more information about registration and the AKC in general go to www.akc.org

Once your application form sent to the AKC by mail is processed, the AKC will mail your AKC Registration Certificate to you. On the certificate in addition to your puppy's official registered name, you'll see listed the registered names of its sire and dam, their AKC titles, in some cases numbers pertaining to the rating of certain health clearances (eyes/hips/elbows, etc.) Breeders who complete these health screens appreciate that the AKC includes these as a part of the Registration information. The AKC web page has links to information that will help you understand the standard notation and abbreviations that are found on certificates. <http://www.akc.org/registration/AKCcertificate.cfm>

Taking Care of Your Belgian Sheepdog

Choosing a Vet

As mentioned earlier, you should take your puppy to the vet as soon as possible after bringing it home. It's worth your time to investigate which vet to see well beforehand. Your breeder may make a recommendation if you live in the same locale, or may know a Belgian person in your area whom you could consult for a recommendation.

Choose a vet much as you would choose a physician for yourself. Look for one who gives you treatment options, involves you in the decision-making process, takes time to listen to your concerns, and gives you the benefit of the doubt when you just know that "something isn't right." Ask your prospective vet what vaccination schedule he or she follows and why, what types of heartworm pills they prescribe, and how well abreast they stay of new developments in veterinary care. Avoid a vet who makes generalizations and snap judgments about a particular breed even though he or she may have only actually ever cared for one or two of the breed.

Teeth and Gum Care

Teeth and gums need regular inspection and care. The goal of good oral care is to minimize plaque build-up. Decaying teeth and inflamed gums are more than just aesthetically unpleasant - these conditions can allow bacteria to pass into the dog's bloodstream and spread infection to its vital organs, causing serious illness or death.

The amount of care required to keep teeth and gums healthy varies from dog to dog. Some dogs, much like some people, tend to build up tartar easier than others. Some people have great success with just giving their dog a suitable bone on a regular basis. In other cases, daily teeth brushing is required.

There are many new items on the market that can help. Dog toothbrushes, tooth scalers and toothpaste, mouth rinses, and rawhides impregnated with an oral care product, to name a few. Don't use human toothpaste for dogs. At some point, it may become necessary to have your dog's teeth professionally cleaned a procedure which requires that the dog be put under anesthetic. The important thing is to inspect your dog's teeth and gums regularly and to consult your vet for suggestions about its oral care.

Feeding Your Belgian Sheepdog Puppy

A typical Belgian Sheepdog puppy needs two to three well-balanced meals a day, plus plenty of fresh, clean water at all times (except in the late evening while it's still being housebroken). Ask your breeder about the puppy's feeding schedule and what food(s) it was raised on. Current studies show that the higher protein and fat in puppy-formulated diets may not be necessary for proper growth, and that a regular adult maintenance diet is best for all puppies. If you switch your dog to a new food - at any time in its life - allow one to two weeks for the changeover. Start with a ratio of 1/4 old food to new, then move up to a 50/50 ratio, and so on until the dog is totally adjusted to the new food. (When your dog is two- to three-years-old, you can switch it to a lower-protein, fat- balanced diet, especially if it's neutered).

Here's a typical menu: breakfast, 1/2 to 1 c. of kibble moistened with warm water and 1 T of good quality canned dog food; lunch, same quantity of moistened kibble and 1 T of cottage cheese; dinner, same as breakfast. Vary this diet at any time by substituting in a cooked egg, a small amount of cooked fresh meat, fruit, vegetables, and yogurt or goat milk. Moisten the food until the puppy is about 12 weeks old. Also give your puppy large dog biscuits and baked beef leg bones to chew on. Increase the amount of food as your puppy grows. Ask your breeder, your vet or an experienced dog person to show you how to gauge your puppy's proper weight by feeling the amount of fat over its ribs and hips.

Supplementation should be done on a very careful basis. Most breeders have a system that they've found works for their line of Belgians. If in doubt, ask your breeder and your vet. Many add brewer's yeast and garlic tablets daily to their dogs' food, especially during the summer as this has been shown to help prevent fleas.

Spaying and Neutering

Spaying and neutering are safe procedures for healthy Belgian Sheepdogs and will not affect their companionship or working ability. Neutering frequently does dramatically reduce objectionable sexually-related problem behaviors. It also makes it easier to board your females for family vacations where pets cannot come along.

Spaying and neutering reduce or eliminate the possibility of several types of common canine illnesses and diseases: testicular and prostate disease in the male; and uterine infections and mammary tumors in the female.

Spaying and neutering both involve a general anesthesia and incision through the skin after the general area has been shaved. Some vets require the dog to stay overnight, and both procedures require a short recuperation period.

The greatest benefit can be reaped if dogs are neutered before reaching sexual maturity. Traditionally, the veterinary community has said six months of age is the ideal time. Consult with your veterinarian about the best time for your Belgian. Females should not be spayed while in season, but males can be neutered at anytime.

Breeding a litter of puppies should be left *only* to those breeders who have made a commitment of time, money, and education to the *long-term betterment* of the Belgian Sheepdog. A long-term commitment is years and decades not months. Belgians that are not part of a planned breeding program in which the breeder has working knowledge of many generations of health, temperament, and structural soundness of the line should be neutered or spayed.

Breeders often use contracts which include Limited Registration Applications to help urge new owners to alter their companion Belgian. Both dog breeders and pet owners should recognize controlling the dog population as a moral obligation.

Anesthesia and the Belgian Sheepdog

Over the years, there have been reports of Belgians who died while under anesthesia and/or in the immediate recovery period.

Do Belgian Sheepdogs have a breed-specific sensitivity to anesthesia? Vets say they hear from owners of many breeds that their breed is sensitive to anesthesia. So far, results for Belgians are inconclusive. Some Belgians may be sensitive to anesthesia, but it may also be true that dogs who have died under anesthesia may have had an underlying, but undetected illness such as cardiac myopathy that actually had more to do with the death than the anesthetic.

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If you' re interested in researching this topic, many articles have been published about the Belgians and anesthesia in the Belgian Sheepdog Magazine, and about dogs and anesthesia in general in general dog publications.

What should you do if faced with putting your Belgian under anesthesia? As a precaution, let your vet know that Belgians have died under anesthesia and that some in the breed feel Belgians need to follow the same anesthesia protocol as the sighthound breeds do (most vets know about these). Make sure your vet follows established standards of care that include obtaining a current weight and physical exam, appropriate and carefully administration of doses of drugs, and careful monitoring during and in the immediate recovery period after general anesthesia.

Grooming

Coat Care. Infrequent bathing is all your Belgian needs unless it gets soiled. Brushing at least once a week - from early puppyhood on - is far more important. Most breeders accustom their puppies to being brushed and groomed by the time they get to you. Just keep up the routine. "Line brushing" is a technique that can make it easy for you to get the dog thoroughly brushed and keep track of your place in the coat. Make a "part" or line, brush the hair down flat toward the head of the dog, then make another part or line, one section of the dog at a time. Take care to brush down to the skin in each area before moving on.

Belgians shed or "blow" their coat at least once a year. How much depends on the amount of coat they carry: Belgians in cold climates tend to develop bigger coats; Belgians in warm climates tend to have shorter guard hairs and less undercoat. If your dog is heavily coated, expect to pull out enough hair to fill many bags. Some people even spin the shed-out hair into yarn, and use it to make hand-crafted winter garments.

The fastest way possible to get out blowing coat is to step up your brushing routine. Warm baths also help to release the hair. Be prepared: your Belgian will look considerably different just after blowing its coat. Never fear, just as you get used to it looking this way, the coat will grow back.

Nail and Foot Care. Nail and foot care are an essential part of routine grooming. Keeping nails well-trimmed is vital for proper foot development. Your breeder will have begun this, just continue the routine. Remember, what Belgians learn about as puppies, becomes routine to them as adults. Trim nails so they' re short enough not to click when the dog walks on a hard-surface floor. Puppy nails grow rapidly, so you will need do this frequently. Once your dog grows up, about once a month should be sufficient.

There are ways to minimize your puppy' s upset during nail trimming. Condition it to accept having its feet handled on a regular basis when its nails are not being trimmed. In fact, handling all parts of your puppy on a regular basis is a good way to insure they will readily accept physical contact with vets and others in the future. Make it part of your daily interaction with your puppy - massage its legs, gently squeeze a foot, rub its tummy

and scratch its head while talking to it gently and soothingly. Your puppy will grow to love this treatment every bit as much as we humans love a back rub.

Trimming nails when the puppy is sleepy is also helpful. Have an assistant distract the puppy with a very tasty chew toy and talk calmly. Remove only the tip of the nail at a time - it' s better to follow this method over frequent sessions than to put the job off too long and then try to cut back too much at once. If you do hit the quick (which is hard to see on black nails) it' s not the end of the world. How much and how long it will bleed depends on how much of the quick you cut. Generally, all you need to do to stop the bleeding is to apply pressure to the nail tip for a few minutes while you keep the puppy resting quietly. A styptic powder called Kwik Stop, or even flour, can also help staunch the bleeding.

Belgians grow quite a bit of hair between the pads of their feet. Use blunt-end scissors or an electric clipper to trim this hair away on a regular basis in order to promote proper compact, tight foot development. It' s easier to learn this by being shown, so ask your breeder, or an experienced Belgian person for a short demonstration.

Grooming Tools

Belgians are fairly low-maintenance in terms of grooming, but several tools are necessary:

Pin Brush - A medium-size usually works best with Belgian coat. Be sure to select one that fits your hand well.

Slicker Brush - This works well for grooming the areas of the body that have shorter hair and also are fairly effective in pulling our old blowing coat in some areas. It' s also a greabrush for puppy coats.

Grooming Rake - This is the best tool for removing blowing coat. It is very effective in removing large amounts of coat with each stroke once the coat is really ready to let go.

Mat Comb - Even with regular grooming, a Belgian may still get the occasional mat in its coat - typically behind the ears and between the hind legs and breeches. Mat combs generally have a built-in cutting device that slices through the mat for easier, less painful removal and with less damage to the coat than by just taking scissors to it.

Nail Clippers - Choose either guillotine-type or heavy-duty steel blades. Human nail clippers work well on puppies.

Electric Nail Grinder - To give nails a smooth, even finish.

Blunt-end Scissors - For trimming hair between the pads.

Electric Clippers - For trimming hair between the pads.

Training

Early Training

Early training is very important for any puppy that will grow into a large dog. A Belgian puppy can very quickly learn the basic commands such as sit, come, down and stay. More importantly, early training helps teach the puppy how to learn. All it takes is five minutes two or three times per day, some treats and patience. If you' ve never taught a dog or puppy any obedience, please ask your breeder to show you the basics.

Puppy Kindergarten

Puppy Kindergarten is probably one of the most important classes you and your puppy can attend, and most areas offer this type of class. In puppy classes, you and your puppy can learn the basics in a safe, controlled and fun atmosphere with other puppies and a knowledgeable trainer. These classes are based completely on positive reinforcement and will help forge a lasting bond between you and your puppy. Once you and your puppy have completed a Kindergarten class, you can go on right away to a Puppy Agility class, a motivational class, or wait till the puppy reaches six months to a year in age for more structured obedience training.

Whether or not you enroll your puppy in classes, make sure to give it a learning experience every day. Belgians are sensitive and willing to please, and most people will find them very eager to learn new things. Belgians learn to readily accept what they learn about as puppies.

If you do run into problem behaviors with your Belgian, the first person you should consult is your breeder. He or she should be able to offer advice and tips on dealing with the problem, and will have a sense of whether this problem requires some work with a dog trainer. If your breeder is not available, your vet should be able to provide you with the names of training facilities in your area.

Don' t blame them! Train them!

Helpful Training Guides

There are many excellent books on dog care and training. Pet stores, libraries, bookstores, dog supply catalogs and vendors at dog shows are good sources for books on the subject. Here are just a few:

- "A Dog of Your Own," M.A. Stoneridge
- "The Dogs Mind," Bruce Fogle
- "Dog Problems," Carol Lee Benjamin
- "How To Raise A Puppy You Can Live With," Rutherford and Neil
- "The Intelligence of Dogs," Stanley Coren
- "Mother Knows Best, The Natural Way To Train Your Dog," Carol Lee Benjamin
- "People, Pooches, and Problems," Job Michael Evans
- "Why Does Your Dog Do That?" Coran Bergman
- "Understanding Your Dog" Michael Fox.

Canine Activities

There are many activities in which you and your dog can participate - competitively, or just for fun. Because of their intelligence, high energy level and eagerness to please, Belgian Sheepdogs are well-suited to most of them.

Earning any of the titles listed in this section allows the dog's registered name to be prefixed or suffixed by the initials indicating the title earned. The initials become part of the dog's registered name, and organizations such as the AKC and UKC award certificates recognizing these accomplishments.

No matter which activity you choose for your dog, take care to choose a trainer who has sufficient expertise in the particular area and who is familiar with Belgian Sheepdogs - for example, be wary of trainers who expect Belgians to behave just like Golden Retrievers and who are unwilling to use training techniques that are suited to a Belgian's intelligence and unique abilities.

Conformation - Both the American Kennel Club (AKC) and the United Kennel Club (UKC) offer championship titles and conformation competition.

Obedience - Both the AKC and UKC offer novice through advanced obedience titles.

Canine Good Citizen - In order to promote responsible dog ownership, the AKC offers the Canine Good Citizen award (CGC). The dog must demonstrate its understanding of simple commands from its owner, and its acceptance of strange dogs and people.

Therapy Dog International - The Therapy Dog International Title (TDI) title requires the dog to pass a series of tests that include basic obedience, tolerance of wheelchairs, canes, crutches, walkers or any other equipment a dog might encounter in a nursing home or hospital situation. Therapy dogs bring immense joy to the patients they visit. There are also other organizations that offer therapy dog titles.

Agility - In agility, the dog runs a course which includes hurdles, A-Frame climbing, tunnels, and seesaws. Many obedience training facilities offer puppy agility classes with equipment scaled down to puppy size. Puppy agility classes are a great confidence builder for young puppies and are an excellent way to introduce your young Belgian to the sport.

Tracking - The AKC offers novice and advanced tracking titles. The dog must demonstrate the ability to follow a track of varying length, age, complexity, and locate articles that have been left on the track. This type of skill is used by police departments but is a recreational sport enjoyed by dog enthusiast as well. Some states also have very active Search and Rescue (SAR) clubs and working groups.

Herding - Herding competition is another way to have fun, work your dog and earn titles. The AKC offers novice through advanced herding titles. There are also several other organizations that offer herding trials and titles. Some organizations also offer herding instinct tests at which your dog can earn its Herding Instinct Certified (HIC) title with no training; the event is a test of the dog's innate ability. Sheep, ducks, cattle and goats are used for this sport.

Flyball - In flyball, the dog must leave its owner, jump over four hurdles, trigger the spring mechanism of a wooden box to release a tennis ball, retrieve or catch the ball, and then return over the hurdles to its owner. All of this is done at incredible speed and with incredible enthusiasm in a relay type of team competition. The North American Flyball Association (NAFA) offers novice through advanced flyball titles.

Temperament Testing - The American Temperament Test Society (ATTS) has devised an all-breed series of tests to evaluate a dog's temperament. Each dog is judged according to what is called for in its breed standard (i.e., a Belgian Sheepdog is not scored the same way a Golden Retriever would be). The test consists of several parts including encounters with friendly and hostile strangers, several strange or noisy articles, a pistol shot, etc. Dogs passing this test are awarded the TT title.

Schutzhund - This is a German form of training in which the dog competes in a combination trials of protection work, obedience and tracking. Novice through advanced titles are offered.

French Ring Sport - This is another form of protection training.

Where To Get More Information About Activities You and Your Belgian Sheepdog Can Enjoy Together

- The American Kennel Club (AKC) - 5580 Centerview Rd., Raleigh, NC 27606, (919) 239-9767.
- The United Kennel Club (UKC) - 100 E. Kilgore Rd., Kalamazoo, MI 49001, (616) 343-9020.
- Agility Association - P.O. Box 850955, Richardson, TX 75085-0955.
- Search and Rescue Organization - P.O. Box 3709, Fairfax, VA 22038, (703) 252-1349.
- The American Herding Breed Association (AHBA) - c/o Carol Lorenzon, 3767 W. 136th St., Cleveland, OH 44111, (216) 941-6330.
- The North American Flyball Association (NAFA) - P.O. Box 8, Mount Hope, Ontario, Canada L0R 1W0.
- United Schutzhund Club of America - 729 Lemay Ferry Rd., St. Louis, MO 63125.
- Therapy Dog International (TDI) - 6 Hilltop Rd., Mendham, NJ 07945, (908) 429-0670.

The Official Belgian Sheepdog Breed Standard

General Appearance

The first impression of the Belgian Sheepdog is that of a well balanced, square dog, elegant in appearance, with an exceedingly proud carriage of the head and neck. He is a strong agile, well muscled animal, alert and full of life. His whole conformation gives the impression of depth and solidity without bulkiness. The male dog is usually somewhat more impressive and grand than his female counterpart. The bitch should have a distinctly feminine look.

Faults- Any deviation from these specifications is a fault. In determining whether a fault is minor, serious, or major, these two factors should be used as a guide:

1. The extent to which it deviates from the standard.
2. The extent to which such deviation would actually affect the dog.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Males should be 24-26 inches in height and females 22-24 inches, measured at the withers. Males under 22½ or over 27½ inches in height and females under 20½ or over 25½ inches in height shall be disqualified. The length measured from point of breastbone to point of rump, should equal the height. Bitches may be slightly longer. Bone structure should be moderately heavy in proportion to his height so that he is well balanced throughout and

neither spindly or leggy nor cumbersome and bulky. The Belgian Sheepdog should stand squarely on all fours. Side view - The topline, front legs, and back legs should closely approximate a square.

Head

Clean-cut and strong, overall size should be in proportion to the body. **Expression** indicates alertness, attention, readiness for activity. Gaze should be intelligent and questioning. **Eyes** brown, preferably dark brown. Medium size, slightly almond shaped, not protruding. **Ears** triangular in shape, stiff, erect, and in proportion to the head in size. Base of the ear should not come below the center of the eye. Ears hanging (as on a hound) shall disqualify. **Skull**- Top flattened rather than rounded The width approximately the same, but not wider than the length. Stop moderate. **Muzzle** moderately pointed, avoiding any tendency to snipiness, and approximately equal in length to that of the top skull. The jaws should be strong and powerful. **Nose** black without spots or discolored areas The lips should be tight and black, with no pink showing on the outside. **Teeth** - A full complement of strong, white teeth, evenly set. Should not be overshot or undershot. Should have either an even bite or a scissors bite.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck round and rather outstretched, tapered from head to body, well muscled, with tight skin. **Topline**- the withers are slightly higher and slope into the back, which must be level, straight and firm from withers to hip joints. **Chest** not broad but deep. The lowest point should touch the elbow, forming a smooth ascending curve to the abdomen. **Abdomen** - Moderate development. Neither tucked up nor paunchy. The loin section, viewed from above, is relatively short, broad and strong, but blending smoothly into the back. The croup is medium long, sloping gradually. **Tail** strong at the base, bone to reach hock. At rest the dog holds it low, the tip bent back level with the hock. When in action he raises it and gives it a curl, which is strongest toward the tip, without forming a hook. Cropped or stump tail shall disqualify.

Forequarters

Shoulder long and oblique, laid flat against the body, forming a sharp angle (approximately 90 degrees) with the upper arm. **Legs** straight, strong and parallel to each other. Bone oval rather than round. Development (length and substance) should be well proportioned to the size of the dog. Pastern medium length, strong and very slightly sloped. **Feet** round (cat footed), toes curved close together, well padded. Nails strong and black, except that they may be white to match white toe tips.

Hindquarters

Legs - length and substance well proportioned to the size of the dog. Bone oval rather than round. Legs are parallel to each other. **Thighs** broad and heavily muscled. The upper and lower thigh bones approximately parallel the shoulder blade and upper arm respectively, forming a relatively sharp angle at stifle joint. The angle at the hock is relatively sharp, although the Belgian Sheepdog does not have extreme angulation. Metatarsus medium length, strong and slightly sloped. Dewclaws, if any, should be removed. **Feet** slightly

elongated. Toes curved close together, well padded. Nails strong and black, except that they may be white to match white toe tips.

Coat

The guard hairs of the coat must be long, well fitting, straight and abundant. They should not be silky or wiry. The texture should be a medium harshness. The undercoat should be extremely dense, commensurate, however, with climatic conditions. The Belgian Sheepdog is particularly adaptable to extremes of temperature or climate. The hair is shorter on the head, outside of the ears, and lower part of the legs. The opening of the ear is protected by tufts of hair. **Ornamentation** - Especially long and abundant hair, like a collarette, around the neck: fringe of long hair down the back of the forearm; especially long and abundant hair trimming the hindquarters, the breeches; long, heavy and abundant hair on the tail.

Color

Black. May be completely black, or may be black with white, limited as follows: Small to moderate patch or stripe on forehead. Between pads of feet. On tips of hind toes. On chin and muzzle (frost - may be white or gray). On tips of front toes - allowable but a fault. Disqualification - Any color other than black, except for white in specified areas. Reddening due to climatic conditions in an otherwise correct coat should not be grounds for disqualification.

Gait

Motion should be smooth, free, and easy, seemingly never tiring, exhibiting facility of movement rather than a hard driving action. He tends to single track on a fast gait; the legs, both front and rear, converging toward the center line of gravity of the dog. The backline should remain firm and level, parallel to the line of motion, with no crabbing. He shows a marked tendency to move in a circle rather than a straight line.

Temperament

The Belgian Sheepdog should reflect the qualities of intelligence, courage, alertness, and devotion to master. To his inherent aptitude as a guardian of flocks should be added protectiveness of the person and property of his master. He should be watchful, attentive and always in motion when not under command. In his relationship with humans he should be observant and vigilant with strangers, but not apprehensive. He should not show fear or shyness. He should not show viciousness by unwarranted or unprovoked attack. With those he knows well, he is most affectionate and friendly, zealous of their attention, and very possessive. Viciousness is a disqualification.

Disqualifications

Males under 22½ or over 27½ inches in height and females under 20½ or over 25½ inches in height.

Ears hanging (as on a hound).

Cropped or stump tail.

Any color other than black.

Viciousness

Approved December 11, 1990

A Word About Belgian Sheepdog Rescue

BSCA Rescue assists Belgians that are lost, abandoned, end up in pet shops, or which must be removed from neglectful, abusive situations.

You can help Belgian Rescue in many ways - through donation of money, by alerting Rescue coordinators if you know of such a situations, or even by adopting a rescued Belgian. Belgian Rescue can also help you. If your Belgian is lost, you should place classified ads, post neighborhood flyers (preferably with pictures, since most people aren' t familiar with the breed), and contact a Rescue Coordinator - he or she will be notified by area shelters and/or concerned breeders regarding an unidentified Belgian Sheepdog.

Contact Rescue Coordinator Susan Fielder at (207) 655-7359 or blackstr@maine.rr.com, who can put you in touch with Belgian Rescue volunteers in your area.

The BSCA would like to thank the members who contributed to this manual:

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