

Congratulations on your Bouvier puppy!



Congratulations on the addition of a Bouvier puppy to your family. The American Bouvier des Flandres Club welcomes you, and wants to help you enjoy your new family member to the fullest by providing you with some basic information.

The Bouvier was developed late in the 19th century in the farming regions of Belgium. Documentation of his ancestry is cloudy but loosely attributed to the berger, a type of sheep dog, the Dutch Griffon and the barbet, or water dog. By the early 20th century he was used as a drover, a draft animal, and farm and family protectors. During the world wars, the home of the Bouvier became a battlefield. The breed's numbers were reduced almost to extinction. Those that stayed in Belgium became ambulance pullers and military tracking aides. Some of those that survived were taken to France and the Netherlands, and they became part of breeding programs in those countries. The Bouvier came to America late in the 1920's and now can be found throughout the United States and Canada. The ABdFC was formed in 1963, and became a member of the AKC in 1971.

The Bouvier legacy has produced a breed with many admirable qualities both as a working dog and a companion. He is a square, powerfully built dog, rugged and formidable in appearance. His harsh coat protects him in all kinds of weather, he has a keen sense of smell, and he is very aware of his surroundings. He thrives on plenty of room to work and play but is not an "outdoor dog." His loving people become his flock, and he wants to be where he can care for them. He is agile and intelligent; he has great spirit and fearlessness but with an even temperament and serene disposition. The average size of a male Bouvier is about 26 inches at the withers, 25 inches for a female, and between 70 and 110 pounds.

Grooming

Your puppy will grow hair! Lots of it. They are a double-coated breed with a harsh outercoat that keeps the shedding undercoat from falling to the floor, but the

undercoat will mat without a good brushing to the skin every few days. Keeping toenails trimmed, clearing matted hair from around the foot pads, cleaning their ears, and keeping teeth free from plaque build-up are important parts of a grooming routine that can prevent potentially serious health problems. An investment in good grooming tools and a grooming table is money well spent (even if you have your Bouvier professionally groomed). Teaching your puppy to be comfortable with a grooming routine is time well spent and is a good opportunity to work on basic obedience commands.



Health

Contact your veterinarian to be sure your puppy has all the necessary vaccinations and is protected from health hazards that may be unique to your area of the country. Bouviers are a large breed and grow rapidly; a diet too high in protein can cause serious problems with bone growth. Several dog food manufacturers have large-breed puppy food available. Feeding two small meals a day is better than one large meal. Limit heavy exercise while your puppy is growing. Exercise is healthy, but don't let, or force, your growing puppy to overdo it. Your Bouvier will be your loving companion for up to 12 or 13 years. Puppyhood goes by quickly. What happens during that short time will have a profound effect on your dog's quality of life.

Training

We can't recommend too strongly the importance of socialization and basic obedience training. A puppy kindergarten that uses positive reinforcement training is a good place to start. Bouviers are protective by nature. Walks and outings with you where they can meet other people and dogs, hear noises, and investigate their world in a safe way are socializing experiences that develop their protective instinct in an appropriate way. These are smart dogs. Don't underestimate them. They are also big dogs. It is much easier to establish yourself as head of the household early on while you can still lift your pupil. Bouvier puppies tend to be "mouthy" and can play rough. While



Bouviers are loving with children and make excellent family dogs, this early puppy behavior can be too

rough for small children. Crate training is humane and safe. It is a way your puppy can be near you any time without getting into trouble, and his crate will become his quiet nest as an adult. The *Beginner's Guide to the Bouvier des Flandres* has a detailed guide to crate training.

Identification

Protect your Bouvier in case it is lost. Identify your Bouvier with a collar and tags. A permanent identification with a microchip or tattoo can be registered with AKC's Companion Animal Recovery. A 24-hour toll-free hotline helps locate the owners. There is a 100% re-homing rate with enrolled animals. For information, call (800) 252-7894.

Breeding

Breeding is serious business, not a casual undertaking! The well being of the puppies themselves (a litter of 10 or 12 is not unusual) is at stake as well as what impact this mating may have on the breed itself. Anyone involved in Bouvier rescue has seen the results of casual breeding. Doing it right (ethically and intelligently) requires a thorough understanding of the standard, knowledge of pedigrees and of temperament. It requires the resources to screen breeding stock for hip and elbow dysplasia, eye disorders, heart and thyroid problems. It requires conscientious care of the puppies for the eight or more weeks before they are ready for their new homes. It also requires being prepared to take a puppy you bred back if it becomes necessary.

Many Bouvier members support health research for the Bouvier through the AKC Canine Health Foundation—a nonprofit charitable organization whose mission is to help dogs live longer, healthier lives. Supporting the Canine Health Foundation helps ensure a healthy future for all dogs. For more information about ongoing health research to help Bouviers, see www.akcchf.org or call toll free 1-888-682-9696.

Spayed or neutered animals are wonderful companions; altering ends the risk of an unplanned litter. A neutered male often becomes more tolerant of other males. Spayed or neutered Bouviers can participate in AKC-sanctioned herding, agility, tracking, obedience and junior showmanship. Performance events develop a tremendous bond between the dog and the handler during training.



Resources

The American Bouvier des Flandres Club invites you to visit our website at www.bouvier.org. The *Beginner's Guide to the Bouvier des Flandres*, membership information and other information can be downloaded from the website.

If you are not able to visit the club's website and would like information regarding the breed and club, please contact the American Bouvier des Flandres Club Secretary.

Karen Florentine
79 W. Indian Springs Dr.
Glenmoore, PA 19343-8939
kflore@ptd.net
610-458-7179

