

# Congratulations on your new companion the Saint Bernard!



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

## Breed History

When Archdeacon Bernard de Menthon founded the famed hospice in the Swiss Alps in the early part of the 11th century, the Saint Bernard was referred to as the Talhund. The most accepted estimate of the breed origination is between 1660 and 1670. Originally watchdogs and companions, Saint Bernards were excellent pathfinders in the snow and ice. They evolved as rescuers at the hospice on the Saint Bernard pass saving over two-thousand lives.

The most famous and most honored dog known in history, Barry, lived and worked at the Hospice from 1800 until 1810. He is credited with saving the lives of over 40 people. He died in Bern in 1814, and can be seen today preserved in the Bern Museum of Natural History. His deeds have been recounted in many books.

The snow storms of 1816-1818 were especially heavy, and the monks thought cross-breeding with a large, long-haired dog, such as a Newfoundland or Leonberger, would protect the short-haired Saint Bernard dogs against the cold.

However, the long-haired dogs could not be used for rescue work. Snow and ice formed in the long hair, accumulating too much weight, hampering their work. Afterwards, the monks sent long-haired puppies to live in the valleys and kept only the short-hairs. Even today, litters occasionally include one or more long-haired puppies.

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

## Daily Care

Saint Bernards need a proper diet, regular medical care including vaccinations, and basic obedience training. Feed young puppies adult dog food, not puppy food. Do not allow your puppy to get too fat and do not force exercise until they reach adult size.

Regular brushing keeps the coat clean and free from mats and tangles. 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. **DO NOT** let a puppy do what he will not be allowed to do as a 150 pound adult. They grow to be a very large dog very quickly, often approaching 100 pounds by 6 months of age.

They *must* learn *not* to jump on people, knock into small children, steal food from the table, or take advantage of their size. This training is best started when you first bring your Saint Bernard puppy home. Many local dog clubs offer puppy kindergarten classes which are an excellent beginning.

Saint Bernards are very intelligent and can be trained for competition as well as general good behavior. Competitive activities you and your Saint might enjoy include conformation shows, obedience shows, agility, 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.

## Breed Facts

- ☞ There is no preferred coat type.
- ☞ Both long-haired and short-haired Saint Bernards shed and need regular baths and grooming.
- ☞ 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. Monk's caps are cute but of no value.
- ☞ All other colors except the dark shadings on the head (mask) and ears are a fault. Freckles are discouraged.
- ☞ At times, Saint Bernards drool. There is no such thing as a dry mouth Saint.
- ☞ Saint Bernards usually weigh between 130 and 180 pounds.

## Spay/Neuter

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. It is a roadmap for any breeding program.



Responsible breeders may strongly recommend that you spay or neuter your pet Saint Bernard. Spaying a female eliminates

the heat cycle and her attractiveness to male dogs. A neutered male will be less attracted to female dogs.

Some studies indicate that altered dogs are less prone to some cancers and other diseases while conflicting studies show an increase in other forms of cancer in dogs altered at an early age. Above all, no giant breed puppy should be altered before the growth plates in the bones have matured and closed, usually between 15 and 24 months of age.

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 capable of reproducing are shown in conformation shows.

As an organization dedicated to the welfare of the Saint Bernard, the Saint Bernard Club of America does not want Saint Bernard dogs abandoned or dumped in animal shelters. Saint Bernard puppies can be “impulse” buys because they are very cute, and movies have shown them to be a very intelligent pet. However, the Saint Bernard is not for everyone. Why not? Bluntly—drool, hair, large quantities of food (and subsequent waste), and the sheer amount of space they physically require. Contact your breeder or the SBCA if you have questions.

## Breeding

Breeding Saint Bernards requires much study, patience and good veterinary care to produce a quality litter of puppies. The female dog should not be bred until she is two years old, has been checked for hereditary problems, and is declared to be in good health. The same is true for the stud dog. Both should be registered with the American Kennel Club so the litter and individual puppies can 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 need to stay with the mother until 7 weeks of age. Before selling the puppies, they must have dewclaws removed, get started on their puppy shots, be 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 or does not work out in the new home.

Some owners are tempted to breed Saint Bernards in a misguided attempt to make a profit. A good breeding may only break even, and sometimes the expenses will be more than any income.

“Fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants” breeding of Saint Bernards is not beneficial and often harmful to the breed and your dam. Responsible breeding is done by experienced, knowledgeable persons using quality Saint Bernards, with the goal of improving the breed. Careless and uninformed breeding only harms and dilutes the wonderful characteristics valued 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 ownership, selective breeding, showing, and training of purebred Saint Bernards. The club first organized in 1888, making it one of the oldest breed clubs in the United States.

## More Information

[www.saintbernardclub.org](http://www.saintbernardclub.org)

Visit the Saint Bernard Club of America's website for more information about Saints, events, local clubs, and links to other sites (Saint Bernard Rescue and the Saint Bernard Archive). The SBCA encourages all owners to learn as much about the breed as possible. The items listed below provide excellent resources to help you and your new puppy get off to a great start.

- ☞ *Basic Care* booklet, \$3.00 each
- ☞ “Owning a Saint Bernard” pamphlet, \$1.00 each
- ☞ “The Young Saint Bernard” pamphlet, \$1.00 each
- ☞ *Fact and Fiction About Our Breed* by Arthur Hesser, booklet, \$3.00 each
- ☞ *Illustrated Commentary on the Saint Bernard Standard*, an illustrated glossy magazine form of the Standard with commentary provided, 45 pages, \$5.00 each. A must for judges.
- ☞ “Tri-fold of the *Illustrated Commentary*,” condensed version of the IC, .10 cents each, 12 for \$1.00. Excellent for judges.

To order the above material, make check payable to Saint Bernard Club of America and mail to Jennifer Hanger, Corresponding Secretary, 1186 Maurertown, VA 22644, (540) 436-8414 (whodat@shentel.net)

*Saint Bernard BREED STUDY CD*, a comprehensive, interactive breed study of the Saint Bernard Dog. Must have educational material for JUDGES and fanciers, old and new. \$39.95 each plus \$5.00 shipping in the U.S. (more to Canada and overseas). To order the Breed Study CD, make check payable to Saint Bernard Club of America and mail to: Dr. Vic Dingus, SBCA Education Chair, POB 1510, Lake Junaluska, NC 28748, (828) 454-1043 (vdingus@gmail.com)

*SBU 101: The Saint Bernard University*, 200 pages, great information for new fanciers and longtime experienced breeders. This is a must for any library. \$25.00 each plus shipping, 5 or more \$20.00 each plus shipping. To order *SBU 101*, make check payable to Saint Bernard Club of America and mail to Carole Wilson, POB 396, Smithton, Illinois, 62285-0396, (618) 978-8808 (kryskara1@aol.com)