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Dog Breeds: What you need to know about the Bernese Mountain Dog

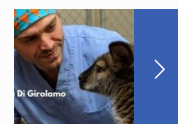
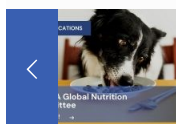
🕒 April 21, 2021

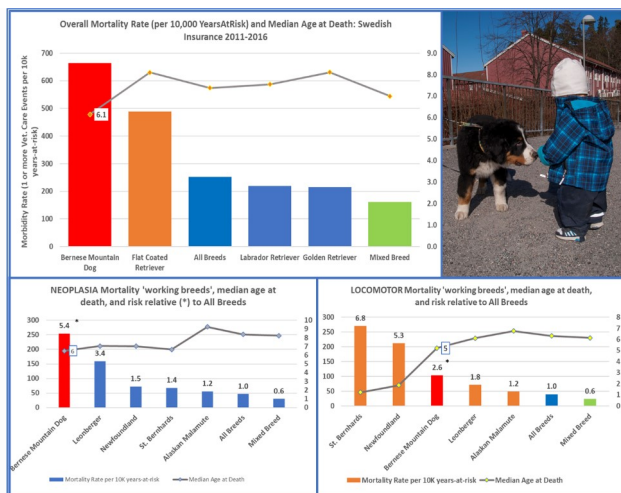
📁 Committees, Partner News, Scientific

Staying up to date with common, let alone rare, health risks in susceptible dog breeds can be difficult. In this regular feature, our Educational Partner, International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) signposts resources on a particular breed and highlights breed-specific diseases.

Meet the Bernese Mountain Dog

Veterinarians worldwide know Bernese Mountain Dogs as beautiful big dogs and adorable puppies, passionately loved by their owners. Unfortunately, we also know them as having an increased risk of locomotor problems, cancer, and other conditions. Many vets will have had a Berner patient die at a very young age. Check out the graph and remember that a median age at death means 50% of dogs (with life claims) died before that age.





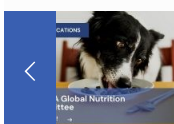
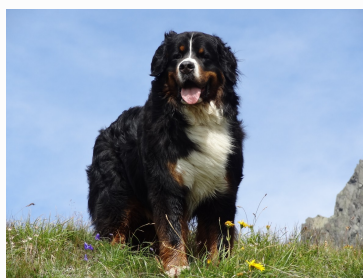
Bernese owners and especially breeders need a veterinarian who is informed about the unique issues in this breed, including with reproduction, and the importance of health screening, genetic tests and testing.



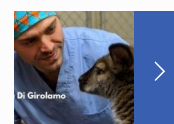
Bernese Mountain Dogs originated from only a few founders and then became popular, especially in the USA and some other countries. In the USA it is estimated that a limited proportion of potential breeding animals are used in breeding (likely less than 20%) and an overuse of popular sires has occurred. Trends have been also followed to increase the typical size and mass of show dogs so there are a range of factors, including reduced genetic diversity that contribute to the declining lifespan, health issues, and compromised reproductive vigour of the breed. And, because of their popularity, many Berners are sourced from high volume and commercial breeders.

We know that consumers who decide they want a certain breed do not necessarily do their research and veterinarians would do well to make sure that new owners are aware of the challenges in this breed, and to warn them of the high risk of chronic conditions and potential for death at less than 6 years of age.

See the IPFD [Get a GRIHP! on Bernese Mountain Dogs](#) article for international population and disease statistics, information on health and genetic tests, and links to further resources for veterinarians and their clients.



Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) is a non-profit working for dog health, well-being, and welfare. This article has been prepared by its CEO, Dr Brenda Bonnett, DVM PhD





More resources to help you:

- [The International Partnership for Dogs \(IPFD\)](#)
- [Get a GRIHP! on Bernese Mountain Dogs](#)
- IPFD's Harmonization of Genetic Testing for Dogs – [Search on Breed, Test/Phone or Genetic Test Providers](#)
- [Life expectancy and causes of death in Bernese mountain dogs in Switzerland](#). BMC Vet Res. 2016; 12: 153. Published online 2016 Jul 25.