

# The Bernese Mountain Dog –

## An illustrated Commentary of the Breed Standard especially for conformation judges



Approved by the  
Norwegian Kennel Clubs  
Standard Committee 2012

The commentaries approved  
by Schweizerischer Klub für  
Berner Sennenhunde  
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The commentaries approved  
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*Second edition – 15.04.13*



### Foreword:

The Norwegian Bernese Mountain Dog Club wishes that this commentary on the standard will be a useful tool for judges and students of the breed as well as for the breeders and fanciers of this wonderful canine companion.

The Norwegian Bernese Mountain Dog Club wishes that the judges use the critiques to point out the special qualities or deviations of an individual dog in relation to the FCI breed standard. If the judge finds fault in the dog's movement scheme, it is desirable that a possible underlying anatomical cause for this fault is indicated in the critiques. In this way a judge is able to transfer his/her competence in anatomy and breed type to a wider audience. Any deviation to the standard regarding the temperament and bite/set of teeth also needs to be mentioned. We also wish that the position and the length of the croup and the tail carriage is commented upon.

The critiques will not only be read by the dog's owner, but they are actively in use in breeding selection.

The NBSK requires of breeding stock to have a certain qualification from the conformation shows – therefore the judges should pay careful attention to awarding “very good” or “excellent” especially regarding the mentality of the dogs.

The author owes a big thanks to the owners of the photos who have graciously given the permission to use these. The pictures show dogs within the range that can be accepted as “champion quality”. Note that some of the dogs in the pictures have a coat that looks slightly too groomed compared to the ideal.

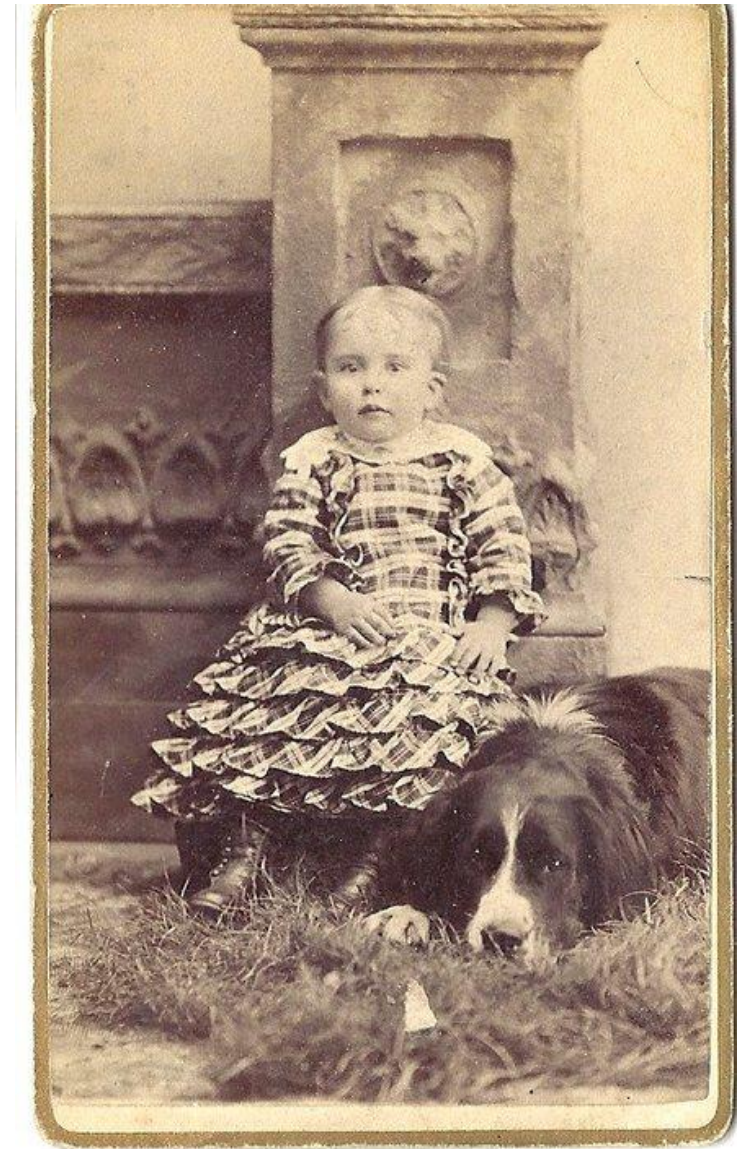
Thank you also to friends and fellow breeders/judges in the UK, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland for reading through the drafts and helping me with the comments. This breed truly attracts wonderful enthusiasts. Special thanks to Mrs. Martha Cehrs from Switzerland, Mrs. Helen Davenport-Willis (UK), Mrs. Wenche Eikeseth and Liv Flathus (Norway). Figures in pages 21, 22 and 34 are copied from the most comprehensive book on the breed: Baertschi/Spengler: Hunde sehen, zuechten, erleben (Das Buch vom Berner Sennenhund, Bern 1992).



### Bernese Mountain Dog – a Brief Historical Summary

(from FCI-Standard N° 45 / 05. 05. 2003)

The Bernese Mountain Dog is a farm dog of ancestral origin which was used as a guard and draught dog and for driving cattle in the prealpine regions and in the midland areas around Bern. Originally he was named “Dürrbächler” according to the name of the hamlet and of the inn of Dürrbach, near Riggisberg in the Canton Bern where these long-haired tricoloured farm dogs were especially numerous. In 1902, 1904 and 1907 specimen of this breed had already been exhibited at dog shows, and in 1907 some breeders of the region of Burgdorf decided to promote the pure breeding of these dogs by founding the “Schweizerischer Dürrbach-Klub”, and fixing the characteristic traits of the breed. In 1910, at a show in Burgdorf where many farmers of that region brought their Dürrbächler dogs to, already 107 specimen were shown. From that day onward this dog, renamed “Bernese Mountain Dog” following the example of the other breeds of Swiss Mountain Dogs, became rapidly appreciated all over Switzerland and in the neighbouring parts of Germany. Today the Bernese Mountain Dog is well known and appreciated all over the world as a family dog thanks to its striking tricoloured coat and its great adaptability.



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

**Utilization:** Originally used as a guard-, draught- and cattle dog on farms in the Canton Bern, today also family dog and versatile working dog.

individual breeders and the breed club. Bernese Mountain Dog is among the breeds with most entries in the conformation shows, and it is not rare to see BMDs placed in the group and in the BIS rings.



### The Bernese Mountain Dog in Norway

Ever since the first imports to Norway in the 1950's the breed has become more and more popular. In 2010 some 400 puppies were registered making the breed the 23<sup>rd</sup> most popular of all breeds in Norway. The level of conformation quality in the breed has been among the best in the world thanks to the efforts of



*Picture: Netty v. Burgdorf, 1906*



**Bernese Mountain Dog**  
FCI-Standard N° 45 / 05. 05. 2003

Land of Origin: Switzerland



**General appearance: Longhaired, tricoloured, strong and agile working dog, of above medium size, with sturdily built limbs; harmonious and well balanced.**

*Comments:* The Bernese Mountain Dog is a strongly built and a robust breed with ability to perform its tasks with a great deal of endurance and agility. It should be able to both pull a heavy load as well as untiringly drive cattle. It is neither light-boned nor gives a heavy or a coarse impression.



It is imperative to understand that this working breed should be able to perform its duties throughout a long life span without unnecessary wear. This is why a correct and balanced anatomy is of utmost importance.



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

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The breed has a sturdy and strong bone structure. Adjectives such as “elegant”, “delicate”, “sporty” or “glamorous” are not identifiable with a correct breed type. “Robust”, “strong”, “sturdy” are suitable expressions of the breed’s bone and construction.

It is not uncommon to find too lightly boned Bernese. Lightly-boned individuals may be both soundly constructed and beautiful – but they are not correct Bernese Mountain Dogs! Strong bone plays an important role in the correct breed type.

The long jet black coat with striking white and tan markings contributes to the breeds’ renowned beauty.

The breed is late in maturing – a Bernese is fully mature at 4–5 years old.

The Bernese Mountain Dog has an anatomy in which no body parts are exaggerated and all parts fit together to form a harmonious, balanced and well proportioned construction. The female and males are in appearance clearly distinguishable (e.g. head size, length of coat and gender expression).





### Important proportions:

- Height at withers: length of body (measured from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock) = 9 : 10, rather compact than elongated.
- Ideal relation of height at withers: depth of chest = 2 : 1.

*Commentary:* The Bernese is slightly longer than it is tall. It is a construction ideally suited for his tasks. It is essential that the length of the body is attributed to a long ribcage, not to a long loin.

It is not uncommon to encounter Bernese which are too long in the body. These might possess a greater, “flashier” action, but it is important to note that all the dogs that qualify for the “Excellent” must possess a “good enough” movement scheme. It is important that the dog that best corresponds to the standard **in all its details**, wins.

The bitches may be slightly longer than the dogs, but only moderately.

It is not uncommon to find Bernese that are too short in leg – but do not be optically fooled by the coat under the chest.

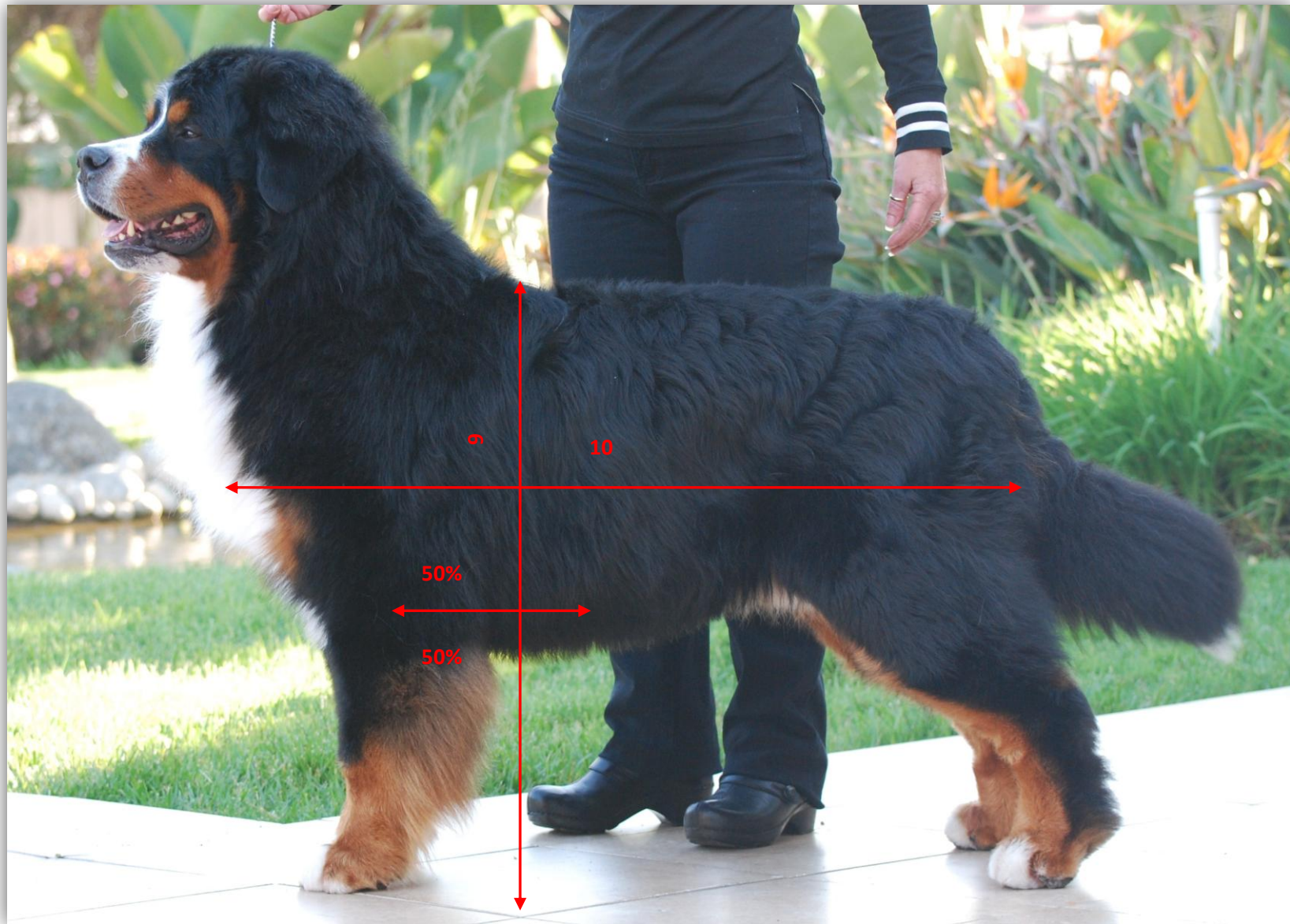
Square dogs (height is equal to length) are also not desirable.

Airy, long-legged dogs are quite common in the youth classes, but these gangly youngsters may grow up to be in balance when

they mature. In mature individuals this fault affects the dog's breed type negatively.

The Bernese should stand and move in perfect balance – an individual with excellent construction will naturally find his parallel and balanced stance– “stand well on his four feet” – without the help of a handler.







### **Behaviour / temperament:**

**Self-confident, attentive, vigilant, fearless in everyday situations; good-natured and devoted to his own people, self-assured and placid towards strangers; of medium temperament, docile.**

Commentary: The typical Bernese mentality is one of the hallmarks of the breed. The breed was originally developed to cooperate with its owner in order to be able to perform its duties, and thus it is still today known for its ability and desire to work with people. The breed is devoted to its owners and the people it knows. A Bernese should never be shy or fearful; or, on the other hand, aggressive. Some reservation towards strangers is quite common but a Bernese should still be self-confident enough to be handled by strangers without backing out or putting his tail between his legs.

While aggressive Bernese are seldom, it is not uncommon to encounter a shy or an fearful individual in the ring. This is a serious fault that should – in clear cases, lead to disqualification. Experience dictates that shyness and fearfulness have both a clear genetic component.

It is not uncommon to find some apprehensive individuals in the youngest official class of bitches (junior); the period around their first heat will often affect bitches hormonally and such behaviour is often temporary. While such apprehension is not desired in the

breed, it is important that the judge should still be able to go over the bitch without greater efforts. He/she may wish to show some lenience in this particular class, but clearly, any individual showing apprehension does not deserve an “excellent” in qualification.



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

If you are in doubt when it comes to the mentality, kindly ask the handler to let go of the dog, and try to greet the dog when she/he is standing freely.

In order to be able to face all situations with self-confidence, the Bernese puppies often need diligent socialization while growing up. Take an ample time in judging the puppy classes to make sure both the puppy and its owner get an enjoyable experience.



A typical Bernese shows joy in the ring with a wagging tail (especially while gaited) without being affected by the environment. If a Bernese is shown with his tail between his legs or if the dog is negatively affected by the environment, its breed type suffers a great deal and he should therefore not be placed.

It is not uncommon to find males which show aggressive behaviour towards other males. It should not be tolerated. A large breed like this should always be under control.





## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard



Note: a Bernese without the typical Bernese mentality is never of a very good or excellent type!

**Head: Strong.** In size balanced to general appearance, not too massive.  
**Cranial region. Skull:** Viewed from the front and in profile little rounded. Frontal furrow hardly marked.  
**Stop:** Well defined, but without being too pronounced.  
**Facial region. Nose:** Black.  
**Muzzle:** Strong, of medium length; nasal bridge straight.  
**Lips:** Close fitting; black.

*Commentary.* The size of the head is proportional to the rest of the body – neither too small nor too dominating in size. The muzzle is well-filled under the eyes. The length of the muzzle is in harmony with the length of the skull without giving a neither too short, nor too long impression. The top of the skull should be relatively flat with softly rounded edges.

The overall impression of the head and expression should be of aesthetically pleasing harmony in the size of the skull and muzzle coupled with a mild and loving, though quite alert, expression.

It is not uncommon to find a narrow skull and a narrow muzzle in individuals who also have a narrow chest and a poorly muscled croup.

The stop between the nasal bridge and the top of the skull should neither be too abrupt nor, on the other hand, too flat.

The Bernese should not have protrusive cheeks or expressive brow ridges. Young, particularly masculine males, have often a slightly abrupt and edgy stop and a noticeable frontal furrow. This is often temporary and should not be faulted at this stage.

A typical Bernese Mountain Dog does not dribble. It is dry-mouthed; a pronounced lip fold and loosely hanging lips are a fault.

The nose is, as a rule, black – but some slightly greyish noses are also common without this being a fault – the breed has little problems with poor pigmentation in general.

The gender should be evident also in the overall construction of the head. There are a number of bitchy dogs, which often also have a light overall construction.

While judging the breed, do not get optically misled by the markings. It is quite easy to be misled by the form of the white muzzle band while assessing the length, fill and the strength of the muzzle.

NOTE: While the importance of head and the expression should not be over-emphasized in relation to other parts in the anatomy, a Bernese with a champion quality should also have a breed-typical and gender-typical expression.



Bitches:



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

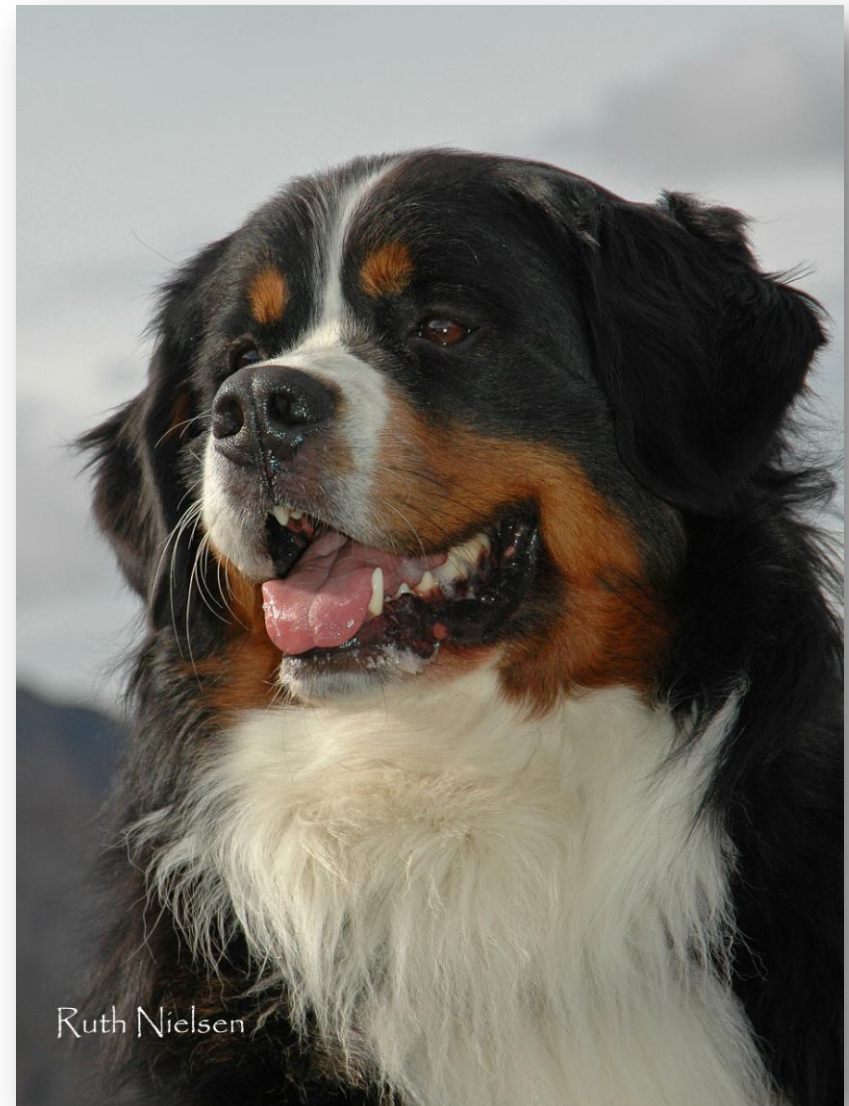
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## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

Males:



**Jaws/teeth: Strong, complete scissor bite (molars 3 (M3) are not taken into consideration). Pincer bite accepted.**

*Commentary.* Irregular scissor bite or level (pincer) bite, as well as lack of complete set of teeth must be noted in the critiques.

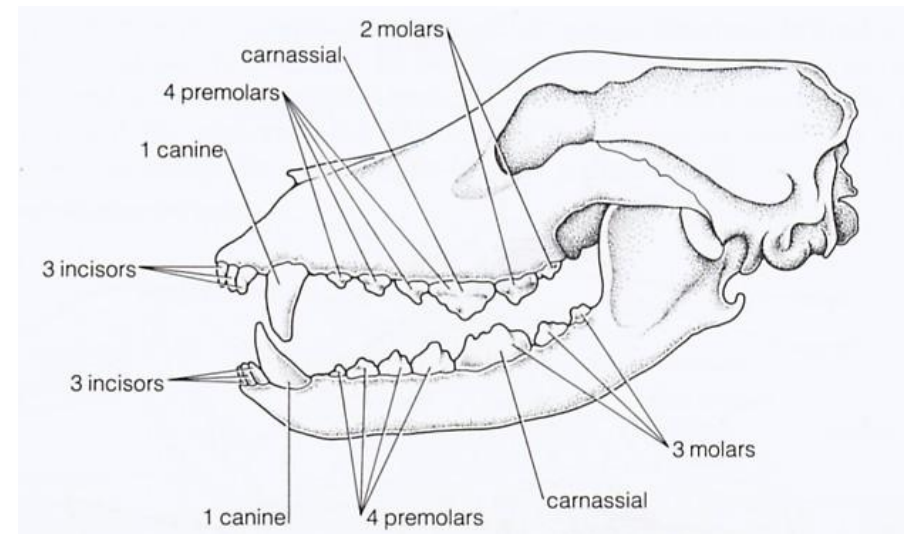
In case of missing teeth, kindly specify which tooth is missing and follow the guidelines of the standard. Pay especially attention to the M 1 in the lower jaw or the PM 4 in the upper jaw – these are big teeth with huge roots, and have an important crushing function.

Under bite is not uncommon and a clear case of such is a disqualifying fault in the breed. Unfortunately, an under bite in a young dog will often develop to be more severe with age.

There are individuals with quite irregularly placed teeth – you may note this in the critiques, but as long as the bite is correct and functional, it should not be given too much importance. Though still uncommon in the breed, a narrow under jaw and/or misaligned lower canine teeth causing holes in the gums must be severely punished. This is clearly causing the dog pain and thus such an individual must be disqualified.

If the dog has a wry mouth, in which one of the halves in the lower jaw clearly has grown longer than the other, the dog should be disqualified.

Puppies with a mild overbite will often develop a correct scissor bite. A bite with two drop-down incisors is not uncommon – this should be faulted proportionally with other smaller faults.





**Eyes: Dark brown, almond-shaped, with close fitting eyelids. Neither too deep-set nor prominent. Loose eyelids are faulty.**

*Commentary:* The Bernese have almond-shaped dark brown eyes with a mild, yet quite alert, expression.

Light eyes are, unfortunately, commonplace and thus it is important that the correct dark eye-colour be noted in the critique by the judge as well as the incorrect light colour. Too much of yellow in the eye gives the dog an untypical hawk-like expression.

Drooping lower eyelids (often coupled with extensive skin in the neck and a lip fold) are faulty.

Inwardly turning lower eyelids are a very serious fault causing the dog considerable discomfort. Note; you are a judge in the ring, and not a veterinarian; you may not ascribe a diagnosis but only describe what you see. Kindly check the eyelids if you discover watering and/or very red eyes.

Round eyes distort the typical Bernese expression so do eyes that are set too close together. Blue eyes result in disqualification.

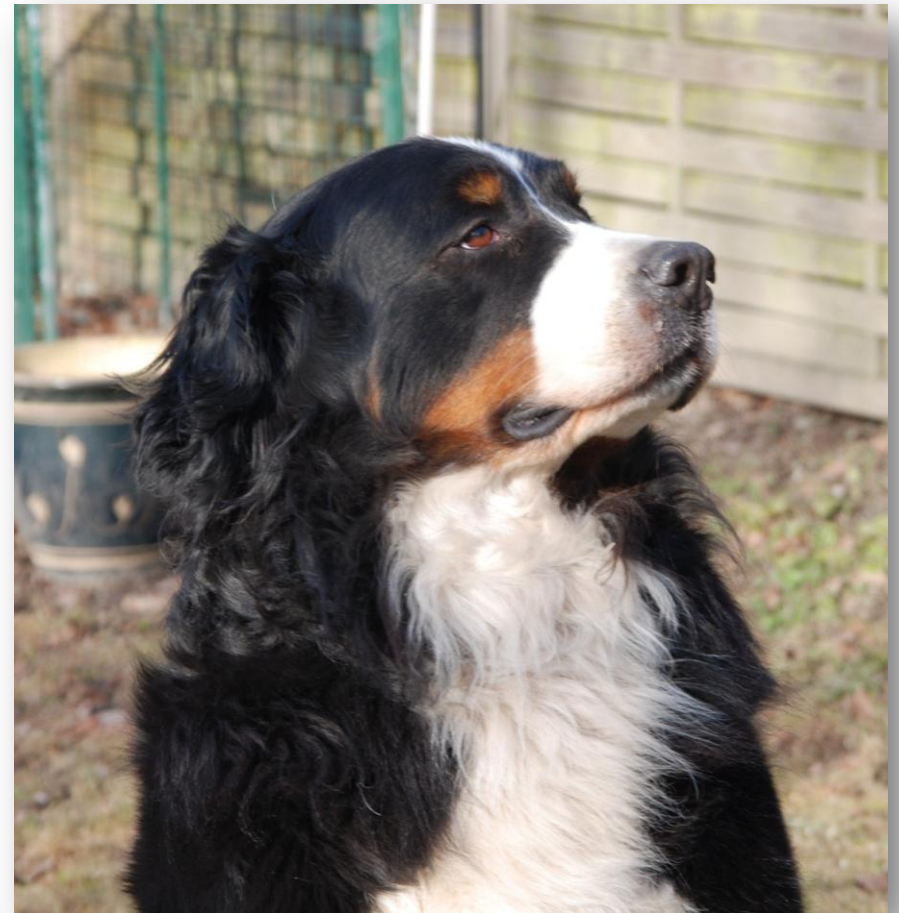


**Ears:** Medium-sized, set high, triangular in shape, slightly rounded at the tips, in repose hanging flat and close to the head. When alert, the rear part of the set-on is raised while the front edge of the ear remains close to the head.

*Commentary.* Note: the ear-set should only be judged while the dog is alert. When the dog is alert, the top of the ears are lifted up close to the slightly rounded top of the skull. Low-set ears are quite seldom but there are quite a few Bernese with round skulls.

Low-set ears detract greatly from the general appearance as do large or “flying” ears.

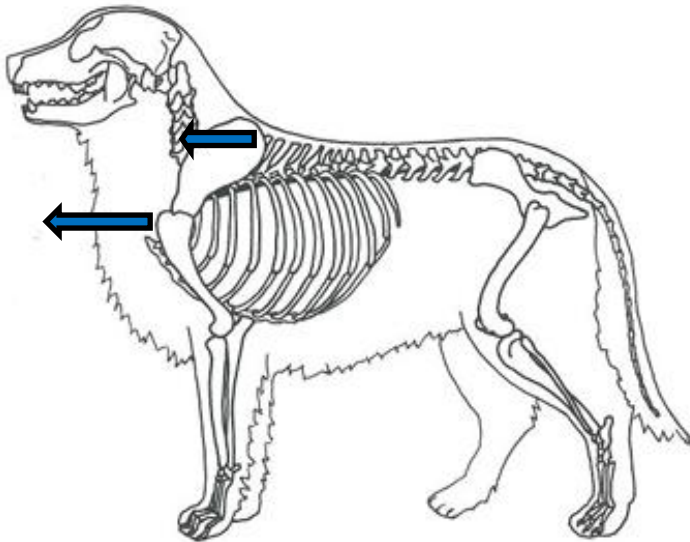
Young dogs may have disproportionally big ears, but their heads usually grow to suit the size.





### Neck: Strong, muscular, of medium length.

*Commentary:* A good length of neck often indicates a well-placed and a well laid-back shoulder. A forward-placed shoulder assembly expresses itself optically in a short neck and a long top line.



*Picture:* An upright shoulder/forward placed shoulder assembly shortens the length of the neck optically.

*Drawing:* Bärtschi and Spengler, 1992, modified by Maija Heinilä



### Forequarters:

Forelegs seen from the front straight and parallel, standing rather wide apart.

Shoulders: Shoulder blade long, strong and well laid back, forming a not too obtuse angle with the upper arm, well attached to the chest, well-muscled.

Upper arm: Long, set oblique.

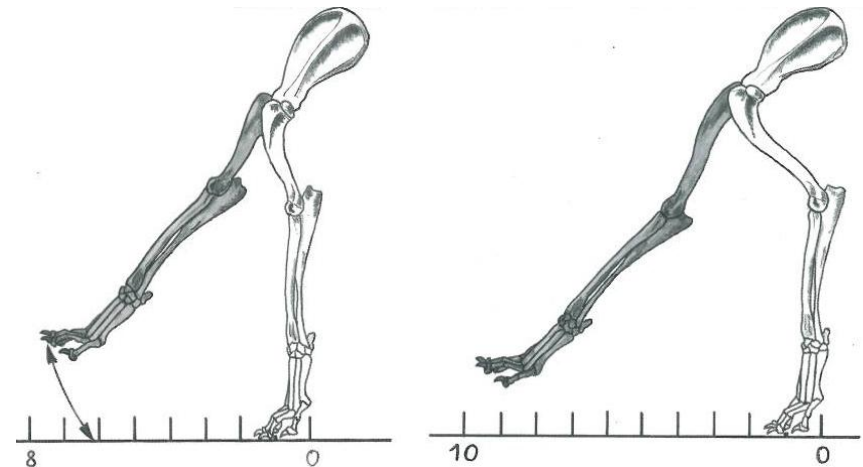
Elbows: Close fitting; neither turned in nor out.

Forearm: Strong, straight.

*Commentary.* Soundly constructed front assemblies are sought after – and often quite scarce. Forward-placed shoulder assembly (with poorly visible forechest) is a common fault in the breed. Upright shoulder blade is a common fault resulting in shorter forward reach.

Upright upper arms give poor support to the elbow as the elbows are not placed snugly against the ribcage. This instability is quite easy to pinpoint when the dog is gaited toward the judge.

Again: a forward placed shoulder assembly and/or an upright shoulder optically shorten the length of the neck. But most importantly: this causes a short and unstable front movement with unnecessary wear on the joints.



*Picture: The effect of a straight shoulder blade and an upright upper arm on the length of stride  
(Drawing from Bärtschi and Spengler, 1992)*



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

**Pastern:** Seen from the side almost upright, firm; seen from the front in straight line with the forearm.  
**Forefeet:** Short, roundish; with well-knit, well-arched toes. Turned neither in nor out.

*Commentary.* The dog carries most of its weight on its front assembly and thus weakness in pasterns should be faulted in mature individuals.

It is not uncommon to find weak pasterns in especially heavy-set Bernese. This is easy to observe also in the movement. The dog seems to trot “downhill” – and the cause of which cannot be attributed to other faults.

It is not uncommon to encounter sturdy-boned puppies with weak pasterns. This age-related weakness usually rights itself when the dog matures.

Extremely straight pasterns lead to poor shock-absorption and unnecessary wear in the nearby joints.

There are dogs that turn their forefeet outward – these individuals often have upright upper arms or shallow ribcages.

Flat, open and loosely knitted feet are not only unattractive but also have a direct effect on the breed’s working capability, a serious but seldom fault in the breed.





### Body:

**Topline:** From the neck running slightly downwards to the withers in a harmonious line, then running on straight and level.

**Back:** Firm, straight and level.

**Loins:** Broad and strong; seen from above slightly less broad than the chest.

*Commentary:* A Bernese should be shown in a fit condition and should boast a healthy musculature. Weak topline is often evident in dogs which are either poorly muscled or overweight. A long loin or a forward placed shoulder assembly (with a steep shoulder blade) also contributes to this problem.

Note: the Bernese often have especially pronounced waves in the coat on top of the loin and on the croup – one more reason for the judge to check the contours of the top line with his/hers hands.

The loin should not be too long – a long loin expresses itself in poor transference of energy from the hind quarters to the front assembly. This becomes evident under assessment of the side-movement in overly convex loin. Strength in the loin is essential in any dog which is expected to be capable of great activity and exertion.

A too short loin that affects the agility of the dog is not a common fault in the breed.

Again: the length of the body should be attributed to a long ribcage and not to a long loin.







### Croup: Smoothly rounded

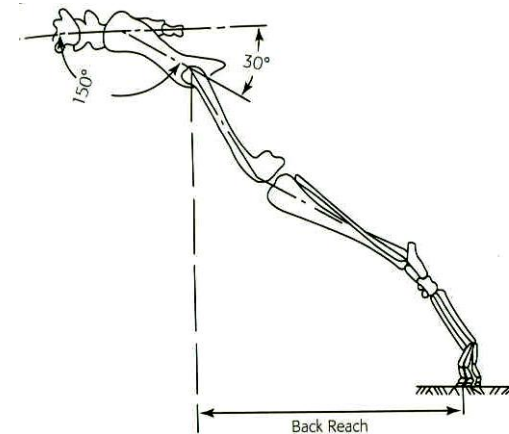
*Commentary.* The breed-typical croup is smoothly rounded and relatively long with enough width to enable the development of sufficient muscle in the thighs.

The length of croup dictates the width of the first thigh as the lengthening of the pelvic bones behind the hip joint gives not only longer but wider and stronger muscles.

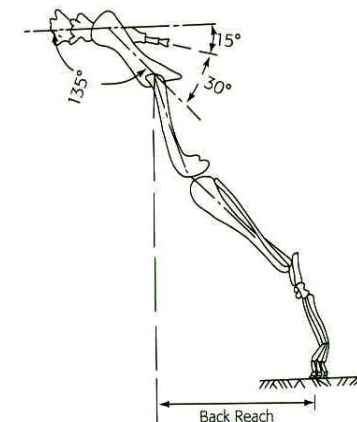
Individuals with an almost a terrier-like flat croup, or with steep croup common to galloping breeds such as the sight hounds, are quite common in the breed.

Dogs with a too steep croup prefer to stand with hind legs drawn under its belly. In trot, these individuals lack in drive from the hind quarters. This is, of course, a serious fault.

Dogs with a flat croup have a good enough drive but often have a faulty high tail carriage. A flattish croup with a short and flat sacral vertebrae resulting in a high tail carriage is an all too common fault in the breed.



*Smoothly rounded croup translates to a long stride.*



*Too sloping croup shortens the stride*

Drawings are copied by permission from the publisher: Dogwise

## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard



**Chest: Broad and deep, reaching to the elbows; forechest distinctly developed; ribcage of wide-oval section extending as well back as possible.**

**Underline/belly: Slightly rising from chest to hindquarters.**

*Commentary:* A well-developed forechest is sought after in the breed as it is also indicative of a well-placed shoulder assembly. Young dogs with well-laid shoulder placement may, however, show a poorly developed fill in the forechest due to the young age, but the tip of the sternum should still be easily detectable.

The breed should have a good spring of ribs to allow for room for lungs and heart but a barrel chest is a fault as it causes the scapula and the upper arm to be pushed out of alignment. Narrow and shallow chests are not uncommon in the breed resulting in poor support to the elbows which again gives an inefficient and “loose” front movement.

All the deviations as to the standard in the chest have a negative effect on the stability of front movement because these do not allow enough support for the elbows.

The chest must reach down to the elbows in order to give enough support to the elbows, and allow for enough room for the lungs and the heart. The tuck-up should not start until at least the 8<sup>th</sup> rib.

Any deviations in the construction of the chest should be considered a serious fault. Also, judges may be warned that abundant chesthair in males may be optically embellishing the actual construction of the chest – therefore hands-on is recommended.





## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard



**Tail: Bushy, reaching at least to the hocks; hanging straight down when at rest; carried level with back or slightly above when moving.**

*Commentary:* A flat and often too short croup and a flat sacral vertebrae results in a high tail carriage. A high tail set and tail carriage, often combined with a curly tail is a serious and all too common fault in the breed.

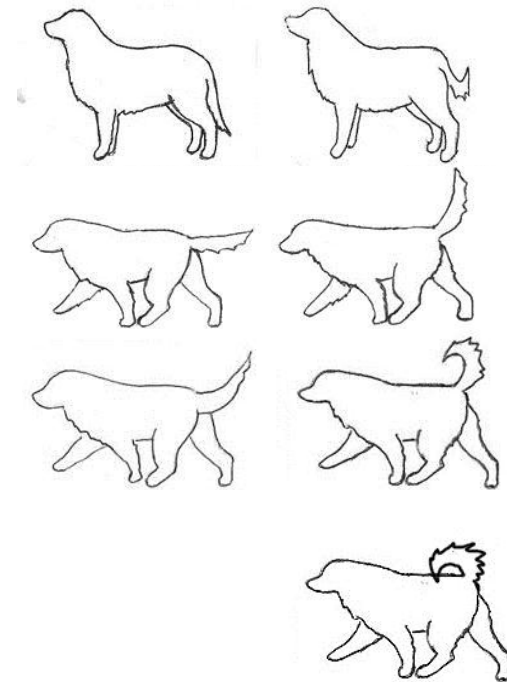
Even if a high tail carriage in itself has no bearing to the functionality of a dog, it destroys the aesthetically pleasing balance in its profile.

It is not uncommon for a male to show dominance by lifting its tail a bit higher than the angulation of its croup or the tail-set should dictate. This can be tolerated if the tail carriage is not disturbingly high, and the croup is correct.

The dogs tail often reflects their mental state – a tail kept between the legs affect the breed type very negatively.

A ring tail is a disqualifying fault in the breed.

Note: a noticeable kink in the tail (which results in a clear change in direction of tail) is a disqualifying fault in the breed. An abnormal thickening of tail vertebrae, often found close to the tip of the tail, should be noted in the critiques.



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*Illustration: Left column: correct tail carriage and tail set. Right column: faulty tail carriage due to a flat croup, high tail set and/or curly tail. The last figure: a clear case of disqualification.*

## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

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**Hindquarters:**

**Seen from the rear straight and parallel, not too close.**

**Upper thigh: Long, broad, strong and well-muscled.**

**Stifle: Distinctly well bent.**

**Lower thigh: Long and oblique.**

**Hock joint: Strong, well angulated.**

**Metatarsus: Set almost vertically.**

**Dewclaws to be removed (except in those countries where it is prohibited by law)**

**Hind feet: Slightly less arched than forefeet, turned neither in nor out.**

*Commentary:* it is not uncommon to find Bernese with well-angulated hind quarters but with relatively straight front angulations or the other way around. It is important for a correct and harmonious movement scheme that the dog has the same angulations in both the hind and the front assembly.

It is not uncommon to find dogs with too open angulations in the hind assembly. This, of course, reduces the drive from the hind quarters. A dog with well-angulated front, but with poor angulation in the hind quarters often stands and moves with high rump. The hind quarters lack drive and length of stride.

Cow-hocked individuals reveal the problem also under the assessment of movement. This is a serious anatomic fault resulting in unnecessary wear of key joints. Cow-hocks have seemingly a strong genetic component.

Mild cases of barrel hocks or narrow hind assemblies are not uncommon. Narrow hind movement is often combined with narrow and poorly muscled croup and a narrow ribcage.

An unyielding and stable hock joint is essential for functionality. The rear pastern stands perpendicular under the hock joint.

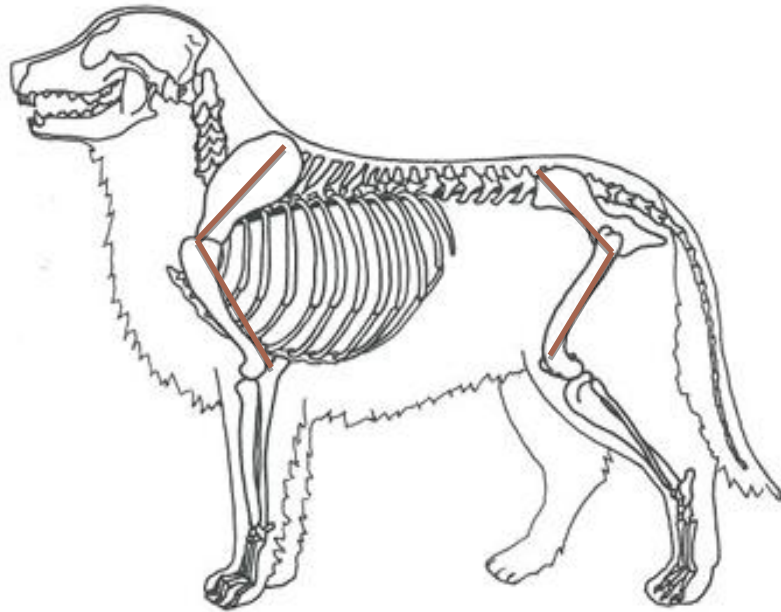
Bernese with too long metatarsus, or rear pasterns, are not uncommon, a fault that may increase the short term speed, but has a negative effect on the dog's endurance and is thus unwanted.

Bernese with overly angulated hock joints have a crawling hind movement with poor drive and leverage from the hock joint.

Flat, loosely knitted feet are a serious but seldom found fault in the breed. This fault has a direct effect on the breeds working capability.

## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

NOTE: the removal of dewclaws in the hind legs is forbidden by law in Norway. Thus the judges should not comment on them.



*Illustration: Good harmony between the angulations in the front and back is important for the movement scheme. (Bärtchi and Spengler, 1992, modified by Maija Heinilä)*



**Gait / movement:** Sound and balanced movement in all gaits covering a lot of ground; free stride reaching well out in front, with good drive from behind; at the trot, coming and going, legs moving forward in a straight line.

*Commentary.* A Bernese Mountain Dog is a trotter in construction exhibiting endurance, strength and agility in perfect balance in its movement. It should move effortlessly with a good harmony between the front and hind assemblies. The well-angulated hind assembly transfers energy through strong, straight and stable vertebrae to a corresponding well-angulated front.



This construction results in a long, low and ground-covering stride. Under movement, the top line is straight and stable and the head is naturally drawn forward.

It is important that the dogs are gaited in their own tempo without exaggeration.



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

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A tired Bernese often spares energy by shifting over to pacing but if you observe that the dog's preferred mode of movement is either pacing, gallop or crabbing, you should always, among other factors, check the harmony of the angulations in front and the hind quarters.

The cause of any deviation/fault in the movement scheme is often a consequence of an underlying deviation/fault in the construction of the dog. This underlying anatomical cause to poor movement should be mentioned in the critique thus assisting the learning experience of the exhibitors.



### Coat:

**Hair: Long, shining, straight or slightly wavy.**

*Commentary:* The Bernese have either a quite straight coat, or a slightly wavy coat. It is quite normal to observe puppies and young dogs with somewhat curly coat on their back. Some waves in the coat are acceptable and quite common, but it is a considerable fault if a mature Bernese has obvious curls in the coat.



As it is the case with many other breeds, the Bernese seem to become more and more subject to overzealous grooming.

Contour clipping is wrong, and should not be encouraged. Note as well that the breed should have a long coat, and thus shortening it by scissoring is wrong. Unruly hairs especially on the feet and the ears may be removed.



Remember – it is forbidden to use products in the coat that alter its colour or texture.

It is important to point out that the Bernese Mountain Dog should not be allowed to become a glamorous overly-groomed show object – the breed should remain what it is – an unpretentious and a beautiful farm dog.

**Colour:** Jet black main colour with rich tan markings on the cheeks, above the eyes, on all four legs and on the chest, and with white markings as follows:

- Clean white symmetrical markings on the head: blaze extending towards the nose on both sides to a muzzle band; the blaze should not reach the tan markings above the eyes, and the white muzzle band should not extend beyond the corners of the mouth.

- Moderately broad, unbroken white marking on throat and chest.

- Desirable: white feet, white tip of tail.

**Tolerated:** small white patch on nape of neck, small white anal patch.

*Commentary.* Even though the beautiful tri-colour markings give the breed much of its renowned beauty, it is important to point out that the importance of ideal markings should not be over-emphasized in judging the overall quality of an individual dog. It is not uncommon to find Bernese with slightly “sun-burned” brownish tint in what should be a jet-black coat. This is due to natural effects of either the season or the hormones. The breed does not have a wrong gene indicating a brown ground-colour in its gene pool.

Some puppies have a greyish undercoat – these individuals, however, will develop the correct black colour when they mature. A deep rust-red tan-colour is an important hallmark of the breed. It is not uncommon to find dogs with too light or too sooty tan-colour.

The extent of the white markings varies a great deal from dog to dog. This is not due to the presence of a wrong gene in the S-locus.

If the white muzzle band clearly extends beyond the corners of the mouth resulting in an untypical expression, it should be faulted.

Too narrow muzzle band or a blaze, or a pronounced asymmetry in the markings is common, but not serious faults. The same can be said of the tickings in the white areas.

A white collar is an uncommon, but serious fault.

It is very useful for the breeders if the judge comments on the deviation to the ideal markings in the critique – but these deviations should not take precedence over much more serious anatomical and functional problems in the breed.







*Picture: A bitch with slightly too much white markings in the face (above) and a bitch with too narrow white markings (under). Both are clearly of champion quality.*





*Picture: There is a great variation of the white markings in the breed.*



## The Bernese Mountain Dog – Commentary of the Breed Standard

### Size:

Height at withers: for males: 64–70 cm, ideal size: 66–68 cm.  
for bitches: 58–66 cm, ideal size: 60–63 cm.

*Commentary:* The breed generally does not have problems with wrong sizes. The most important size-related factor to consider is if the dog is in balance, and that whether all the parts join together in a harmonious and functional overall construction. A smaller male can still be masculine, and a big bitch can be feminine.



A dog of ideal size can look too small in a class with individuals on the higher scale of the size. Kindly use the measuring stick in order to wrongly punish such an individual. It is important that the judges make a conscientious effort not to reward so called overtypes regarding size, volume, length of neck or the angulations. “More” is not always better!



**Faults:** Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

- Unsure behaviour.
- Fine bones.
- Irregular set of the incisors provided that the bite remains correct.
- Absence of any other teeth than 2 PM1 (premolars 1); the M3 (molars 3) are not taken into consideration.
- Coat:
  - Distinctly curly coat.
  - Faults of colour and markings:
    - Absence of white on head.
    - Blaze too large and/or muzzle band reaching noticeably beyond the corners of the mouth.
    - White collar.
    - Large white patch on nape of neck (maximum diameter more than 6 cm).
    - White anal patch (maximum size 6 cm).
    - White markings on forelegs reaching distinctly beyond half-way of pasterns (“boots”).
    - Disturbingly asymmetrical white markings on head and/or chest.
    - Black ticks and stripes within the white on the chest.
    - “Dirty” white (strong spots of pigmentation).
    - Black coat with a touch of brown or red.



**Eliminating faults:**

- Aggressive, anxious or distinctly shy.
- Split nose.
- Undershot or overshot mouth, wry mouth.
- One or two blue eyes (wall eye).
- Entropion, ectropion.
- Kinky tail, ring tail.
- Short coat, double coat (Stockhaar).
- Other than tricoloured coat.
- Other main colour than black.

**Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.**

**N.B.: Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.**



**Good luck in judging this wonderful breed. We love our Bernese – Help us keep the Bernese Mountain Dog healthy, functional and mentally sound.**

