

VonDuewerHaus

Saints for Families

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Getting to know your Saint Bernard Puppy

HISTORY

There are many legends surrounding the origin of the St. Bernard dog. Most commonly believed, however, is that this breed of dog was developed from the crossing of the heavy Asian “Molasser” and the native Swiss dogs that existed during the Roman invasions. The breed, classified as a working dog, is known for its strong instincts, and for its survival under adverse conditions. The St. Bernard is credited with rescuing thousands of people throughout history, particularly in snowdrifts.

TEMPERAMENT

The St. Bernard most often has a lovable disposition, but there are variations in temperament that should be noted when considering choosing a St. Bernard as a pet. Generally Saints love children and are very loyal to family members. They are docile animals by the nature of their size alone. We highly recommend that all of our puppies begin with a basic obedience course at an early age. This age is usually about three months, because by then the puppy has a good understanding of corrections, but still is long before it is fully-grown. While it may seem as cute behavior for a puppy, later, having a 150-pound “puppy” playfully jumping all over its owner is, at the least, annoying, but potentially dangerous for a small child. The puppy must learn at an early age that jumping is not an acceptable behavior. Discipline should be taught very early on to avoid problems later.

HIP DYSPLASIA

Hip dysplasia is a condition where the hip joint, which is a ball and socket joint, does not fit properly into the pelvis. This condition is common to a certain degree in all large dogs, including the St. Bernard. Breeding solely to produce massive, oversized dogs certainly does not help to decrease the occurrence of hip dysplasia. Dogs that suffer from severe hip dysplasia should not be used for breeding. Hip dysplasia is only partly hereditary. Environment and feeding also play a very large role in the development and severity of hip dysplasia. While our dogs are not OFA certified, we do guarantee all our puppies to be free of the crippling hip dysplasia for their first year, provided it is documented by a veterinarian examination. Even the ideal puppy of both excellent OFA parents will be at risk for hip dysplasia if during its growth and development it is kept in an environment such as a kennel run with concrete flooring. We recommend a dirt or gravel run if the dog is to be kenneled. The softer ground underfoot is far easier on the dog’s bone/hip structure. Diet, both during and after the dog’s development is a factor for hip dysplasia. Many owners desire a massive, overweight St. Bernard, and take little consideration to the health and the hips of the dog in order to achieve this. An overweight dog with little or no exercise is more likely to develop hip dysplasia.

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EYE AILMENTS

'Ectropion' is a common ailment of St. Bernard's. It is a condition that affects St. Bernards with droopy eyes. The eyelids turn outward, and sometimes if the eye is too open it can be exposed to infection and may require veterinarian treatment. Less common, but more serious, is a condition called 'Entropion'. Entropion causes the eyelashes to turn inwards, and rub against the cornea of the eye causing ulceration. If it is not treated by surgery, the cornea will rupture. Another condition called 'Enlarged Harderian Gland' occurs when the gland behind the third eyelid enlarges and ruptures. It appears as a red lump in the corner of the eye. This can be treated by a small operation that removes the lump.

GENERAL HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

No matter how healthy your puppy seems, his/her first check-up to the veterinarian should occur right away. Our puppies are never sold before the age of eight weeks. At that time we provide the new owner with their puppy's vaccination records for Parvo, Distemper, Hepatitis, Tracheobronchitis, and Leptospiroses, as well as worming. Your veterinarian will be able to provide you with the continuing vaccination requirements, including future rabies vaccinations, as well as a deworming schedule & the heartworm medications that will be necessary.

FEEDING YOUR PUPPY

Your puppy will be eating dry, free choice, Large Breed Puppy food when you receive him or her. If you feed at regular intervals, just be sure you give enough so that your puppy does NOT eat all of the food. That is the only way to know that enough is being fed. Always offer plenty of clean, fresh water. By the time he/she reaches six months of age the puppy should be switched over to an adult formula, large-breed, dry dog food. This helps slow down the growth rate of the dog, and reduces the risk of developmental problems in your large-breed Saint.

VACCINATIONS

When you get your puppy, he/she will have received the first in a series of standard puppy shots. The vaccination schedule we generally follow starts the series of shots at six weeks, following up at nine and twelve weeks of age, with another booster at one year. As with all questions concerning the health and care of your new puppy, confer with the veterinarian of your choice, and follow his/her professional advice/opinion. There is no right or wrong way of providing the love and care your puppy needs as long as you watch and monitor your puppy's actions. Always call your vet if you notice a change from normal behavior. We wish you the best of luck with your new friend, and hope our St. Bernard brings you joy. Please feel free to call us with any questions you may have regarding the newest addition to your family.