

Finding Those Great Homes

I love breeding my Belgians, I enjoy raising puppies and seeing them go to great homes. So many of the people who I have placed them with have become lifelong friends. Getting started as a breeder and finding those great homes, and then matching puppies to their new homes are some of the biggest challenges of responsible dog breeding.

Very early on I realized that a huge part of responsible dog breeding was being able to place each of your puppies in responsible loving homes. Belgians are not easy dogs to place in your average pet home, there is not a large demand for pets as there is in Shelties or Corgis and they often need more experienced homes. I see many first time breeders struggle to first attract good puppy buyers and then to choose the right homes for each of their puppies. They can end up with several adolescent puppies needing homes or puppies that come back when they are no longer cute and are now too much for an inexperienced owner. The new breeder becomes discouraged and never has another litter.

I have found that these are some of most common ways puppy people find a breeder:

- Referred to me by my dog's breeder or the stud dog owner. This is particularly useful if the breeder or stud dog owner are well respected and people want their lines, or a puppy from an admired stud dog. But sometimes the breeder has their own puppies to place or neither the stud owner nor breeder are well known.
- Referred to me by other breeders and Belgian owners. This is where competing at shows and trial and participating in your local clubs helps, ideally Belgian clubs but your agility or all-breed club helps too. Other fanciers get to know you and your Belgians. They need to feel comfortable referring puppy buyers to you as both a person and as a responsible breeder. If you and your Belgian excel in either conformation or performance you will also attract people that have seen your dog in the ring and want a puppy from your girl.
- Social media sites like Facebook can be very useful in letting other Belgian fanciers know about your litter. GOOD PHOTOS ARE ESSENTIAL. It is a visual media. Attractive photos or a collage of sire and dam demonstrates a level of professionalism. If you have been showing in either conformation or performance you should have some professionally done win photos already. Look at Facebook pages and see which photos catch your eye and make you want to find out who that dog is or check to get more information on a litter. Get a good camera or ask a friend with one to meet you where there is a nice background and take some high quality photos.
- Websites can be really helpful and are much simpler and cheaper to create these days. It makes it easy for others to refer someone to a website to get more information on a litter and breeder. People are used to 'googling' to find everything these days. You can find endless information and videos online to help you setup a simple website.
- The BSCA website has a Breeders Directory. Plan ahead and put a listing up. A responsible puppy buyer who is trying to do the right thing will often start with the National club's website.

- BSCA Newsletter has Whelping Box ads which are free, plan ahead and put one in. A half or full page ad is inexpensive and reaches experienced Belgian Sheepdog fanciers and they can refer puppy buyers to you.
- Catalog Ads. There are some big dog shows that are well attended by the public. On the west coast we have the Golden Gate KC benched show in San Francisco and the Rose City Classic shows in Portland. We tell new people to go to a show and talk to a breeder but they get there at the wrong time and miss judging. A half page ad with a nice photo and contact information can connect with a home that cared enough to go to a show.

The more homes that contact you and are interested in your puppies the greater chance you will have to find **just the right home for each puppy!** I try and answer every email even if it was a short one liner. Sometimes people are in a hurry and younger people are used to texting. You can save an educational standard response that you can copy and paste if you don't feel you have the time to write a long personalize response to each one. Sometimes a simple one line inquiry turns out to be a great home. Just had that happen, I asked for more information and it sounds like a perfect Belgian home. Be courteous and professional. Breeders have enough bad press about being snobs!

Part Two – What to look for in a puppy home and matching puppies to homes.

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