

COMMENTS ON PVBMD SPECIALTY
FEBRUARY 20, 2010
BY CONFORMATION JUDGE MAIJA HEINILA

Dear Friends,

I felt very honored to be invited to judge the Potomac Valley BMD Club Specialty in 2010. This was my first time to judge BMDs in the USA – though I have judged another breed previously. My friend Vigdis Løken and I were very well taken care of by Sandy and Norb Novocin - thank you so much! The warmth and the hospitality I always meet in the USA is just so amazing. This trip was Vigdis' first to the USA, and she was almost in shock of all the kind words she received. We have lost some of that in Europe, I am afraid.

The FCI (Swiss) standard is slightly different from the AKCs but it did not hamper my judging as the overall “picture” is similar. In Europe we are asked to first compare the individual dog to the standard and give him/her a qualification. Only the dogs that receive a first price or better then go on to compete with each other. Judges also dictate (sometimes lengthy) descriptions of each dog, which, of course take some time but it gives the exhibitors some idea of why the dog is placed as it is. Sometimes these critiques are very useful especially to the novice breeders, sometimes not.

Now to the show: the handling was very professional and the stewards so effective – it was a joy to judge. I think Europeans should pick a thing or two from the American handlers although the best constructed dogs always find the correct balance in stance by themselves also “over there” as well. My heart-felt thanks to my wonderful stewards who made the show rules clear to me and assisted me in the best way possible. Thank you all for keeping the judge away from the exhibitors, catalogues, news etc. before the show – the ethical quality of your show practices is highly commendable.

My Overall Impression of the Bernese in the Specialty

First and foremost in my mind is the type that makes a BMD a BMD: the bernese I saw had, for the most part, the right balance and proportions. The majority had the strong bone and the strength needed to pull heavy loads, and the agility to be able to drive cattle. They seemed happy, and willing to please their handlers. The coats and coloring were striking – in Europe we prefer slightly less white in the face and rather look for a rich tan-points. I don't personally punish slightly overly white bernese as long as the type is there. Colors (more or less white) are quite easy to breed, after all. My overall impression was that the dogs I judged had excellent bone, good angulations both in the front and hind quarters which, of course, translates to a sound, true (and typical) movement. There was good harmony in the grades of angulation in front and back quarters– in some countries the breeders are good with hind angulations, but forget the front resulting in faulty movement. Good, strong and not too long hocks were also a delight to observe. I found sound movement even with the oldest of exhibits - speaks well of the American breeders! Yes, I made you run for your money, but as BMD is a working breed I take it for granted that the dogs and their owners are in good shape ☺ ☺

I personally liked the overall quality in the veteran males (both classes), best of all classes. Kudos to their owners and breeders!

My BOB Anastasia's Royal Rumpus stood out among the bitches - just a delightful type; I am confident she could win in any country I have ever judged in. My BOS Indian Hill's Unleash the Dragon is still very young, and although slightly "lippy", had the type I look for. Interestingly enough, my winners reserve dog was his brother. My Awards of Merit went deservingly to the wonderful veteran males, and a very striking champion male. All these dogs would do great also in Europe.

Now, some points to consider: I felt the males were better in type than females. I saw some huge females, over the height preferred by the standard. Some also lacked in femininity. A good fill under the eyes was lacking in some. Beware of light eyes – they are not the easiest faults to get rid of in the bloodlines. Though not a part of my judging: I found an awful lot of tartar in the teeth of even young dogs – it could be a good idea to remove it before it causes infections and worse.

Before the show I was slightly apprehensive about the extensive grooming practice which is common in the USA, but apart from a dog or two, it barely affected my judging at all. (I think I am going to use the same shampoo on my own hair as some used on their dogs – smelt great!) One or two males were too extremely groomed and even scissored, and looked slightly "off-type" in my eyes. Too bad, because the dogs underneath the overly groomed coat were otherwise of excellent type and construction.

Thank you again for this opportunity I was given – I will not forget this weekend thanks to you all, and your beautiful bernese.

Maija Heinilä
Kennel Milkcreek, Norway