The BARC BEACON
Shining the Light of Hope and Freedom

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THE PEOPLE BEHIND BARC

"LULU COUACAUD"



Lulu with Elroy

Hi, my name is Lulu, and I am the BARC Treasurer. I have two great kids, Gabby (14) and Gage (12), and a husband who has put up with me for the last 15 years, which is no easy task. I am the type of person who tends to jump in with both feet, so when I saw that BARC needed a Treasurer, and I had done this type work before for other non-profits, I called Amy and said if they wanted me, I would do it. Guess what?? They wanted me!

We have two BARC babies, Bijou 2.5 and Elroy 1.5, and let me tell you, they keep me busy--usually chasing down clothing and replacing destroyed items. Let me back up a minute and tell you how I got involved with Berners and, more specifically, BARC. In July of 2005, we lost our Lab, Leo, to cancer. Being the mom of the family, I had to take him in and sit with him while he went to sleep, then come home and comfort the family. After that, I was not in the market for another dog. It was just too hard, and I **definitely** was not in the market for a *puppy*. My husband and I had neighbors in Arizona who had Berners, and we used to admire them all the time. We figured that one day we would have one. Well, after Leo's death, Scott started looking up Bernese Mountain Dog breeders in the area and found a couple of reputable ones. Then he started talking about getting a Berner. Thankfully, they were expensive, and I didn't want to invest that kind of money while I was still mourning my lab. I, however, started looking for Rescue groups and happened across BARC. They had an 18 month old female who was cute as could be, and I thought that sounded like a good age…and she was pretty small, so I sent an email to Amy inquiring about the little girl. Amy sent me back a note saying that she was already adopted but that we could fill out the application, and she would keep us in mind.

Continued on next page

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BARC TIDBITS	2
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK	3
IF I DIDN'T HAVE BERNERS	4
CANADIAN-USA BARC GET TOGETHER	5
BARC FAMILY SPOTLIGHT	6
CANINE CANCERS	8
PROBIOTICS & DIGESTIVE ENZYMES	9
HANDLING PET LOSS & GRIEF	10
LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART	11
THERAPY DOGS	12
HELPING BERNERS IN NEED	14
THE LAST BARC	14

BARC OFFICERS:

- **President**: Amy Kessler (kessler@micoks.net)
- **Vice President:** Courtney Erickson (cerickson@everestkc.net)
- **Secretary:** Marilynn Blake (mblake1595@cs.com)
- **Treasurer:** Lulu Couacaud (LULUCOUACAUD@msn.com)

BARC BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- Gary Turner (kcberner@sbcglobal.net)
- Liz Caldwell (lcaldwel@grapevine.net)
- Vilma Briggs (brnrmom@aol.com)

The next thing I know, Amy is calling me on a Saturday morning telling me she has a 3 month old little girl who she thinks will be perfect for us! I tell her I want an *older* dog, so she tells me she will email the picture and see what I think….duh!!! Of course she had to be ours!! So Scott and I jumped in the car and took a little road trip to Kansas. Bijou (meaning Gem or Jewel) is just that; she is also my petulant child and a total counter surfer. She refuses to behave and listen, and I couldn't love her any more than I do! And it certainly doesn't hurt that she is so darn cute!!



Abby, Scott, Lulu & Gage

After that, I decided I wanted to help Amy, Courtney, and the BARC group. The best way for me to do that was to become Treasurer. We live in Albuquerque, NM, and it is not geographically desirable for fostering or helping with transports, but I can handle the books from anywhere.



Elroy & Bijou

A year later, I was on the website one day and noticed there were puppies. I made a comment to my husband about them, and a week later I am on my way back to Kansas to pick up Scott's "mid-life crisis", Elroy. Now we are one big happy family. The dogs make us smile every day, which is a good thing since we are on our 3rd hot tub cover! I guess they make good chew toys.

I substitute taught at the elementary school my kids attended until last May, when my youngest advanced to Middle School. Now I have a home-based travel company that helps people go on 5 star vacations at 3 star prices. I am having a blast working from home, and my fur kids love it because I am home with them most days. I am thankful Amy sent me that first email which has placed me smack dab in the middle of this Berner world. It is a great community of people, and the dogs are amazing.

BARC TIDBITS

NOTICE:

We are looking at doing a new column periodically throughout the year for our newsletter to showcase BARC individuals who have started a business about their dogs, for their dogs, or because of their dogs (like Debby Fitch with Truman Collars, or Tracy Werner with Natural Pet Market). This is a great opportunity for BARC owners to connect and help each other find products or services provided by other BARC owners.

Commitment would be for a one page article outlining what your business is, why it was started, and it's relation to your dogs. Pictures and email and website addresses can be included. If you or someone you know would like to contribute to "BARC Families at Work", please contact Lisa Hawes, Newsletter Editor (address on page 3) to participate in an upcoming issue.

NEW FOR 2008:

Interest has been expressed to be able to submit a **Memorial** to the newsletter when someone has lost their beloved BARC dog.

We also thought it would be nice to allow BARC parents to **Brag** in the newsletter about any achievements earned (e.g. Obedience titles, CGC or Therapy Dog designations) by their BARC dog.

So, new for 2008, if you would like to submit a Memorial or a Brag for any occurrences after January 1, 2008, please send a picture and story (100 word maximum) to Lisa Hawes, Newsletter Editor (address on page 3) by the specified newsletter submission deadline.

This is not meant to be for a special one time issue, but rather, for those events when they happen throughout the year. Memorial or Brag submissions are strictly the responsibility of the BARC parent, and participation is voluntary. Once received, submissions will be published in the next available newsletter, but could be dependent on spacing issues.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



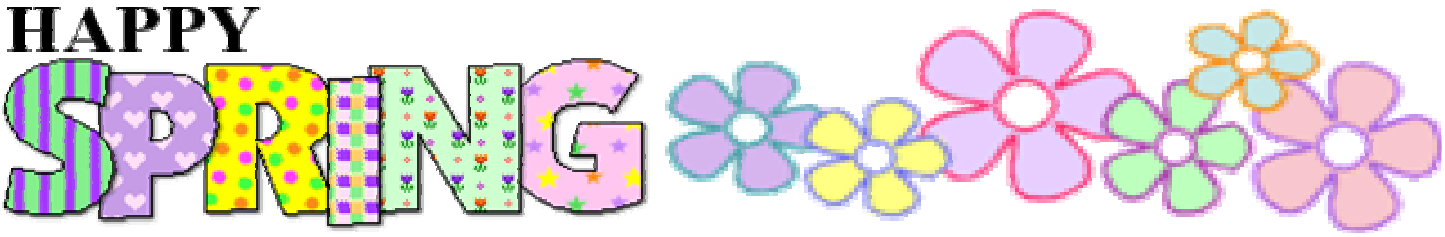
Lisa with Bosley

Greetings, everyone! As we head into spring, we hope that this newsletter finds you all well and your BARC babies (and other fur kids) thriving. We have yet another jam-packed issue for you this quarter, so get ready to spend some time perusing this first issue of 2008!! Please pay special attention to the announcement of upcoming Berner fundraisers. We felt like there might be a number of BARC families missing out on the opportunity to participate in these awesome events that raise much needed funds for everything from our own beloved BARC to the Berner-Garde Foundation (about which we've had some articles in past newsletters) to Willem's Cancer Research Fundraiser (that you read about in the December issue in the "Family Spotlight" section). You can participate by donating items and/or by bidding on the donated items. It's great fun, and you get some NEAT prizes!! Joye Neff is a dear to organize and run each and every one of these fundraisers! What would our Berner community do without folks like her???

In this issue, we have all the articles you've come to count on as well as several articles on various topics that we hope you'll find interesting and educational. It's sometimes a challenge to find that balance of fun/entertaining material *and* educational information. I hope we've done at least a decent job of balancing the two. As always, our heartfelt thanks to ALL those involved in the development of this newsletter! Guys, we just couldn't do it without you! So whether you write articles, proof articles, send me ideas, do layout, or just lend moral support—you are so very appreciated! And one of the things I find the coolest about this whole newsletter venture is the willingness of so many folks to get involved in submitting articles! I think the more involved we *all* are in it, the more exciting it gets! So have your tissues handy for some of the articles, be prepared to chuckle at others, get ready for your heart to be touched by yet another…and know that each and every article is written out of love for Berners, BARC, and especially BARC families.

As always, let us know what you think and/or if you have some ideas to share for upcoming issues. Simply email me, the editor, at lkhawes@yahoo.com.

Lisa Hawes, mom to BARC babies, Bosley and Bernie



NEWSLETTER STAFF:

- **Newsletter Editor:** Lisa Hawes (lkhawes@yahoo.com)
- **Assistant Editor / New Owners' List:** Marilynn Blake
- **Assistant Proofing:** Mary Ann Monte
- **Layout & Technical Production:** Rob & Sherry Hartung

CONTRIBUTORS:

- **BARC Board Articles:** Cheryl Thorton
- **Health & Wellness Articles:** Andrea Brin
- **Training Articles:** Pat Tackett
- **Miscellaneous Articles:** Lisa Florin
- **Behavioral Issues:** Helen Hollander

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

Deadline for submissions to June issue of BARC Beacon is Thursday, May 1, 2008.

All submissions to be sent to the Editor, Lisa Hawes by email at lkhawes@yahoo.com.

If I didn't have berners . . . .



I could walk around the yard barefoot in safety.

My house could be carpeted instead of tiled and laminated.

All flat surfaces, clothing, furniture, and cars would be free of hair.

When the doorbell rings, it wouldn't sound like a kennel.

When the doorbell rings, I could get to the door without wading through fuzzy bodies who beat me there.

I could sit on the couch and my bed the way I wanted, without taking into consideration how much space several fur bodies would need to get comfortable.

I would not have strange presents under my Christmas tree -- dog bones, stuffed animals, toys, treats nor would I have to explain to people why I wrap them.



I would have the money ....and no guilt to go on a real vacation.

I would not be on a first-name basis with 6 veterinarians, as I put their yet unborn grandkids thru college.

The most used words in my vocabulary would not be: out, sit, down, come, no, stay, and leave him/her/it ALONE.

My house would not be cordoned off into zones with baby gates or barriers.

My house would not look like a day care center, toys everywhere.

My pockets would not contain things like poop bags, treats and an extra leash.

I would no longer have to Spell the words B-A-L-L-, F-R-I-S-B-E- E, W-A-L-K, or T-R-E-A-T.

I would not have as many leaves INSIDE my house as outside.

I would not look strangely at people who think having ONE dog/cat ties them down too much.

I'd look forward to spring and the melting of snow instead of dreading mud season.

I would not have to answer the question "Why do you have so many dogs/ animals?" from people who will never have the joy in their lives of knowing they are loved unconditionally by someone as close to an angel as they will ever get.

How empty my life would be.

Author Unknown



CANADIAN-USA BARC GET TOGETHER—JAN.27/08



It started with one email….and ended up with a spectacular walk with 12 Berners from Canada and the United States on the shores of Lake Erie.

I saw someone with a local address; she knew someone else with a BARC Berner; the Canadian folks already knew each other. We talked on-line, and it just snowballed…which is very appropriate in Southern Ontario/Western NY this time of year.



A Canadian winter…

No, they are not igloos!

Winter in this area is not what you would expect. It's not cold, grey, or miserable. We have wonderful sunny days with spectacular snow scenes. Everything good about the area came together that day. The sun was bright, the sky was blue, and the weather was warm….and, yes, we consider 32 degrees warm!

The cars pulled in, one at a time, and out jumped the most amazing group of dogs. Big guys, little girls, shy ones, very friendly ones and…a puppy! An 11 week old ball of fur and curiosity named Yogi. How we all wanted to take him home…everyone, that is, except Cinderella--but that comes later.

The scene was perfect – miles of snow covered, soft sandy beach which made walking very easy. The wind blows across Lake Erie from the west and, therefore, the eastern end gets truly amazing ice formations. It looked like we were walking on the moon.



Everyone! Pay attention!

Organizing that many dogs takes a while, especially when we all had to meet and greet each new arrival. But once the leashes were untangled, we were off!

All the dogs got lots of ear scratches and pets; the shy girls agreed that perhaps it wouldn't be too bad after all; and Yogi, well, Yogi was just Yogi--running around and checking out every body part of every dog.



L-R, BARC'S Cinderella, BARC's Lainey, Kramer, BARC's Maddie

Taking pictures was not easy – no one stood still for a minute. We tried to get a group shot, and you can see that the well-composed portrait we had hoped for was not to be. And it was not just the dogs that were moving around….everyone was so darned friendly that the owners spent more time chatting than posing.

So many new doggy experiences. We all cheered on Bernise as she forded the creek against her better judgment. A local Jack Russell terrier came over to investigate and won the award for bravery in the midst of all those big, black bodies. Maddie's tail even came out from between her legs a little bit as she felt more comfortable with all her new friends. And Yogi decided that Cinderella would be her new best friend. Only Cinderella was not keen on this idea and kept giving us that, "Mom, get this pest away from me!" look. She tried to keep away from Yogi, and that made Yogi even more anxious to follow her.

After two hours of walk and talk, we headed to the cars and were surprised with treats! Lynn Whiteley brought bags of wonderful dog cookies for everyone from her store. She even checked with Customs to see if we could bring them back across the border! For those of you who are interested in what we deal with during cross-border trips, apparently the liver-flavored treats were off limits, but peanut butter ones were okay.

So who was there? From the U.S., we had JoAnn Boehm with BARC's Maddie; Diane Meslinsky with BARC's Lainey and Kramer; and Judith Van Nostrand and Paul with BARC's Cinderella. From Canada, there was Lynn Whiteley and Jack with BARC's Frankie, Flirt and their Golden, Whisper; Jim and Judi Widdicombe with Marley and Bernise; Zoli and Susan Pozsonyi with Crosby and little Yogi; and Catharine and Steve Labatt with Burly and BARC's Kansas. Unfortunately, due to winter storm conditions in their area, Sherry and Rob Hartung with Joye and Harley, were not able to attend.

So many happy dogs went home tired that day! It's events like this that remind us how wonderful the lives of BARC dogs have become. And, yes, we plan to do this again real soon!.



The end….or Yogi's end

BARC FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

"THE LOWE FAMILY"



Pamela & Bob Lowe with their crew!

When I was a young girl, I fantasized about having the "perfect" dog… any dog…that would be just as well-trained as *Lassie* from the popular television series.

At the age of ten, I got my first pup. She was a mixed breed and a fine looking imitation of a Labrador Retriever. I took Dutchess to free training lessons in the park. She did a great job. But she wasn't *Lassie,* and I certainly wasn't Timmy.

Through the years, I have had other dogs, chosen mostly for their "cuteness factors". Having zero background knowledge on breed temperament, I vowed never to make decisions based on puppy breath ever again. That is, until I was hit between the eyes and square in the heart by Cupid's arrow when I met Grace, a BMD, working at her owner's travel store. Grace was plopped just inside the doorway and appeared unbothered by people having to step around her. If someone reached down to pat her head, she just rolled her eyes upward or let out a huge "humph". After previously having three dogs that were wound tighter than rubber band balls, I thought to myself, "This is ***the*** *Lassie* for me".

I did my research: online, offline, with our veterinarian, with people in-the-know. I even gave myself lots of time--years, in fact--to carefully think this through. Then, I started to contact private breeders. I happened across a link to BARC in my internet searches, keeping this site on the back burner (or is that Berner?).

After being on a waiting list for almost two years, I received Olive (Intrepid Twilight Bark). Much to my chagrin, she is my twin in every way possible: She is the *Lassie* from Hell. Wild Pup Highlights: Olive was chosen by the trainer to demonstrate, and she responded by sticking her tongue out! Olive grabbed a steak knife from the kitchen counter and chased my son around the family room! The only difference between the two of us is that I do not eat dog poo. As she outgrew her teenaged moments, I thought that her personality and temperament were so delightful, that it was time to add another Berner to our joyful home.

This idea brought me back to BARC. For some reason, I just couldn't shake the image of Freckles, as a puppy, with his crooked legs. I felt that I should open my heart up to a dog that has had a miserable beginning in life, and give it a chance at having a spectacular life. I kept checking the "Adoptable Berners" page, oohing and aahing, and reading the comments to my husband. But men don't understand the subtleness behind women's hints. Men have to be hit over the head with directives.

"Look at Jack. Isn't he cute? We ***need*** Jack." I've learned that when I talk with Bob, if I use the phrase "road trip", then lights begin flashing, confetti falls from the sky, trumpets sound, and I know I've won. I got the okay to contact Amy, who put me in touch with Stephanie Smith, Jack's foster mom. Through emails and phone calls, Stephanie deemed us a "perfect family" for Jack. In no time, Bob and I were in the car carrying dog food, dog toys, dog bedding, and maybe a change of socks for ourselves, heading from Castro Valley (30 miles east of San Francisco), California on the West Coast to Eden Prairie, Minnesota, near Minneapolis. My father's comment, "Don't they have dogs in California?" brought on this response from me, "Yes, Dad, but California doesn't have Jack."

When we met Jack, he was a skinny, scruffy, stinky, scaredy-dog. It was heart wrenching to take him away from his foster family where he was just beginning to feel settled and finally behave like a real dog. There were many tears prior to loading Jack into the back of our station wagon. Stephanie was relieved that Jack was being adopted into a loving home; we were grateful that she and her dog, Payton, had taught Jack everything he needed to know about doggie life outside of a puppy mill.

Jack was extremely subdued on the way home. He did not eat and barely drank water. He stayed by my side at all times, following me into the motel bathrooms to make sure I hadn't abandoned him. Bob and I were a wreck worrying about him by the time we reached the California border. However, throughout our entire journey, we never gave up on Jack. Jack was allowed to sleep on the motel beds, cuddled between us. We enticed him with grilled chicken in Rock Springs, Wyoming, ice water in Park City, Utah, and winning the jackpot in Winnemucca, Nevada. We treated him to NPR, Prairie Home Companion, and Bob's incessant chatter.



The Blessing of the Animals

When we pulled into our driveway, Jack was greeted by Olive and our oldy-moldy dog, Flakes, and he just knew he was home. Suddenly, Jack came alive, and life has been exceptional for him ever since. He has definitely gained weight, and his coat is healthy, soft, and glossy. Jack no longer emits that puppy mill stench. Although he is still wary of a few new and unusual things, Jack can boast that he is an ace at catching snacks, keeping schedules, yodeling, and protecting his mom, Olive, and Zsa Zsa.

Continued on next page

Last year, Flakes crossed The Rainbow Bridge. Olive and Jack were very affected by her passing--more than I thought they would be. They moped around the house and backyard as if they were two kids already bored by the second day of summer vacation. Bob and I had talked about getting another dog (good things come in threes), but we hadn't reached the serious stage yet. Just this past June, an "email conversation" on the BARC list spread like wildfire about the cuties that had become available. All it takes is one person with eagle eyes to say, "Did you see…?" and we pop on "talking" all at once. Cecelia was the cutie-patootie that seemed to catch everyone's eyes, including mine. I just couldn't stop pulling up her photo! The only question Bob had was, "Road trip?"



Olive, Zsa Zsa & Jack

We were on our way after I made the formal inquiries, put in an application, and waited for the official okay. Meanwhile, I had stressed myself to death believing that Cecelia was going elsewhere. Olive and Jack were beginning to knit a straight jacket for me from the basket of their fur I'd been saving.

Once again, we loaded our car with tons of dog stuff, including a tiny, floppy, stuffed Berner to keep Cecelia company on the long journey home. Cecelia had whelped a litter soon after being rescued by BARC. Because she had been so malnourished, her pups did not enter this life in a good way, so we thought the berner stuffie might bring her comfort. Bob and I decided to pack underwear for ourselves this time around, just to mix things up a bit.

This road trip would take us to meet Brenna Haskin and Amy Kessler in Louisburg, Kansas. Brenna's entire town had been flooded, and she and her family had temporarily moved in with the Kesslers. We took our now familiar route to the mid-west, stopping in Concordia, Kansas to do Bob's ancestry research.

When we finally reached Amy's, I thought that I had died and gone to Heaven…if I could name every one of God's creatures, I would find it living at Amy's. But this is a story of it's own for another day. Everywhere I turned there were dogs of every size, shape, and breed. Anna, Brenna's daughter, announced, "Here's your dog." I turned around and saw, gulp, three, four, five Berners! Brenna gently caught Cecelia's collar and brought her to me. Cece and I talked, nuzzled, she jumped up on the couch next to "her" Papillion and wrapped a leg around "her" dog. That was the beginning of our love story.

Brenna cautioned me that Cecelia was sassy; however we couldn't believe that she was capable of being sassy. What we did notice was a dog that was tired of going for car rides as we struggled to get her into the back seat several times a day…one of us had to push Cece's rear while the other pulled her leash from the other side. Unlike Jack, Cecelia was not a worrywart. She could sleep through any kind of weather and on any road condition. She discovered the car's air vent and hung her head in front of it, dangling her front legs over the edge of the seat. She entertained herself in the motel rooms by looking in the mirrors and tapping at her image. Like Jack, Zsa Zsa loved sleeping on the bed. She also loved to hog pillows. Toilet water seemed to be a delicacy.



Pamela with her crew & Sheira with Arthur

We had stopped for lunch in Lincoln, Nebraska when life magically blossomed. It was blistering hot, and the only shade available at this tiny take out place was under a tiny tree that was dripping with sticky sap. I tied Cece's leash around the trunk, and she became unbearably sassy… tugging, lunging, yelping, and scraping the dirt…she was not willing to leave my side. I was all of three inches away from her. That's when I had my epiphany. Cece had the wrong name. What brought me to this sudden and deep understanding? First of all, her mother came from Hungary. Second, she adores looking at herself in the mirror. Third, she *is* sassy. She is just like Zsa Zsa Gabor! With the undoing of the tether and her BARC name, Zsa Zsa became a happier, albeit sticky, sappy, sassy dog.

The moment we got home, Jack and Olive bolted out of the front door. Jack literally screamed and ran straight towards Zsa Zsa, leaping into the air, greeting her as if he knew her from a past life, of her history, or perhaps he picked up the scent of Amy. It was the most touching moment between animals I have ever experienced in my life.

Zsa Zsa was deceptively underweight. She had a full, fluffy coat that hid her boney frame. Even our vets were concerned when they met her. Dr. Hill remarked that it was possible that Zsa Zsa had already had at least two litters as there was possible scarring from a previous caesarian. Poor girl, she wasn't even three years old when we adopted her. It wasn't long after this that she dropped her coat and was left with a downy layer of fuzz. With a healthful diet, good company, shelter, and love, things have bounced back to beyond normal and then some.

Jack and Zsa Zsa are extremely connected to one another--more so than they are with Olive. Zsa Zsa still clings to me, following me around the house, sleeping on the floor next to me at night, and slapping me in the face as if I were a Beverly Hills cop. Jack has no desire to go to doggy school, preferring to get his knowledge from experiencing life itself. As for Olive, she is in the backyard right now digging around for her PhD in "alpha dogma".

Am I still looking for ***the*** *Lassie*? Nope. They found me.

CANINE CANCERS—PREVENTION & EARLY DETECTION

There are approximately 72 million companion dogs in the United States. Each year, 1 million of these dogs develop cancer. The odds are that a dog owned by someone reading this article will be among those dogs that develop cancer this year.

Recently, I attended the American Kennel Club's Breeders Symposium at The Ohio State University's Veterinary School. One of the speakers was Cheryl London, DVM, Ph.D, Diplomate, ACVIM (Oncology) and Shackelford Professor of Veterinary Medicine. The subject of her research is canine cancer, in particular mast cell cancers.

According to Professor London, the general themes in veterinary cancer prevention are similar to those in human cancer—early detection, risk reduction, and use of new, advanced therapies. Indeed, these themes have been responsible for the unprecedented reduction recently in human breast, colon and lung cancers. She went on to say that since many cancers that dogs get are similar to those that occur in people, especially children, there is no reason why the same strategies cannot be applied to veterinary cancer prevention, making a proactive dog owner a critical part of the veterinary cancer prevention team. Here are Dr. London's suggestions for helping you become proactive in the fight against canine cancers.

Clearly, there are actions that pet owners can take both to reduce the risk of certain cancers and to aid their dog if he is diagnosed with the disease. **Prevention is key**. Prevention consists of three basic strategies: 1. Spay/neuter your puppy before they are sexually mature; 2. Head off health problems early; and 3. Keep your dog in good condition with regular exercise and sensible eating. By spaying (before the first heat cycle) or neutering your dog you can prevent mammary and testicular cancers later in the dog's life. In the case of males, neutering also prevents prostate enlargement later in his life. Unless your dog is part of a **responsible** and educated breeding program, there is virtually no defensible reason for not sterilizing your dog. The second point, head off problems early, is motivated by the fact that cancer is most often curable in early stages. If you find a lump or bump, Dr. London advises pet owners to "always get a diagnosis." Typically, this involves obtaining a fine needle aspirate or biopsy of the lump or tissue and sending it to a pathology laboratory for diagnosis. If it turns out to be nothing, you will be relieved. If the pathology report comes back as a cancer, the early diagnosis will give your dog a much better chance of fighting the cancer.

What else can dog owners do as part of their dog's cancer prevention/awareness program? Be aware of any changes in your dog's appetite, weight, or energy level. Be on the alert if your dog should begin to drink excessive amounts of water or urinate frequently. Take time each week to examine your dog's body for lumps or bumps. This can be done as part of your regular routine of stroking, massaging, brushing or bathing him. Don't forget to look inside his mouth for any masses or growths. If you see or feel something unusual, have your dog seen immediately by your veterinarian. Don't wait until his annual appointment. Similarly, don't forget yearly health examinations. Your veterinarian is educated to spot warning signs that the average pet owner may miss. Make a list of items that you wish to discuss with your vet, and take the list with you to the appointment.

As your pet ages and is at greater risk for cancer, consider having your vet perform annual blood work (e.g., a complete blood count and a chemistry panel) and perhaps a chest X-ray or abdominal ultrasound on your senior dog. When you visit your veterinarian, give her a detailed health history of your dog. Most veterinarians understand that in the course of living with a dog, the dog owner gains insights about the dog's general health that cannot be detected easily in the timeframe of the average office call.

If the laboratory results come back as a cancer diagnosis, consider all of your options before deciding on a final treatment plan for your pet. Again, Professor London emphasizes that cancer is most often curable in the early stages.

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Nancy Melone, Ph.D., is a former BARC board member and Treasurer (the person who did the paperwork to get BARC it's 501c3 tax exempt status!). Nancy competes with her Bernese Mountain Dogs in various dog sports and working events. She is a member of Dog Writers Association of America (www.dwaa.org), the local (www.trbmdc.org) and national Bernese Mountain Dog clubs (www.bmdca.org), and Westmoreland County Obedience Training Club. She is active in breed rescue and canine health. To contact Nancy, send e-mail to ***nmelone@nauticom.net.***

PROBIOTICS & DIGESTIVE ENZYMES



Andrea with Woofit

Digestive issues are very common in all dogs. Many BARC dogs are more susceptible to problems with digestion because of poor nutrition before rescue or in utero.

Diarrhea, gas, and stool eating (Coprophagy) are common concerns of owners. In these cases, I often ask if the dog is being given a probiotic or digestive enzyme supplement. In speaking with many families, I have realized that these two supplements are often confused. Many think they are one and the same. **Both** have their place in our dogs' diets as well as in our own.

The reasons for using **probiotics** can range from recent anti-biotic use to a weakened immune system. Probiotics have become popular through the consumption of yogurt products. However, feeding yogurt is not enough when probiotics are needed as a part of the diet regime.

Probiotics are live and beneficial bacteria. Lactobacillus acidophilus, Bifido-bacterium bifidum, and Lactobacillus bulgaricus are some of the more well known strains of probiotics. They maintain and restore a healthy gut. Probiotics are absolutely necessary to help:

- Manufacture B group vitamins, biotin, and folic acid.
- Produce natural antibiotics which can protect against harmful bacteria such as salmonella, E.Coli, and shigella.
- Regulate and stimulate many aspects of the immune system.
- Display significant anti-oxidant activity.
- Inhibit the growth of some yeast (eg. Candida Albicans).
- Detoxify harmful chemicals and carcinogens from the body via the intestinal system.
- Increase energy levels.
- Reduce inflammation.

They are especially useful in the following situations:

1. Antibiotic (drugs that kill bacteria), antifungal (drugs that kill fungi and yeast), and antiprotozoal (drugs that kill organisms such as Giardia and Malaria) drug use
2. Chronic diarrhea
3. Chronic constipation
4. Poor diet
5. Mal-digestion and mal-assimilation
6. Colitis
7. Inflammatory Bowel Disease
8. Use of drugs that inhibit the immune system

Digestive enzymes often prove to be important for similar reasons. Stress, travel, separation, anxiety, and aging often effect the production of enzymes by the body. Their function of is to break down food in the intestine into smaller molecules. The major digestive enzymes are protein molecules that are produced and stored in the pancreas. They include trypsin, chymotrypsin, amylase, and lipase. The trypsin and chymotrypsin break down protein molecules, the amylase breaks down starches, and lipase does the same to fats and triglycerides.

Breaking down the molecules of food into smaller sizes is an important part of the overall process and allows nutrients to be absorbed by the cells that line the intestine. Because they are not stored, they must be taken with each meal, preferably with the food.

Digestive enzymes are often helpful when changing foods, in issues of constant digestive upsets, in regulation of ‘the gulps’, and in the control of Coprophagy. The old folk remedy which used meat tenderizer actually worked because the tenderizer contained bromelain, a digestive enzyme. Digestive enzymes often go hand in hand with probiotics, and many combination formulas are available.

Neither of these two supplements can solve *all* problems for *all* dogs, but they may help your dog’s digestion and absorption of vital nutrients which is important for long-term health and well-being. If your dog suffers from digestive upsets, discuss the options available to you with your vet or a well-qualified canine nutritionalist.

Written by Andrea Brin

Andrea is skilled in canine massage and has completed course work in acupressure for dogs. Animal wellness comes naturally to Andrea, who has spent the last five years on a quest to create a holistic health environment for her two Bernese Mountain Dogs, Woofit and Chi. Andrea also works as a nutritionist and wellness consultant. Her journey with her own dogs led her to bring services to the canine community that had previously only been available to their owners. She has chosen to step out of the box, think critically about their care and listen to their needs. She was instrumental in the development of Berner University and presents at the BMDCA National Specialty each year. Currently, Andrea is working with The Rabies Challenge Fund and other wellness projects.

HANDLING PET LOSS & GRIEF — A PERSONAL JOURNEY



Romeo
12/8/99-1/18/08

I lost my beloved Romeo to a despicable disease. He was not supposed to die, and I was not ready to say goodbye. There was still so much for us to share together.

I have suffered many losses in my life, both human and animal companions. I am aware of the emotional stages we humans go through when we experience any loss. However, my understanding of the grieving process did not lessen the pain I felt when Romeo died. But armed with this knowledge, I find that I am coping better with the emotional roller- coaster ride than I once did.

Losing a pet can be terribly difficult, and it is often made even more difficult to bear since there are so many people who don't understand the strength of the bond that can develop between a person and their pet. What they sadly fail to recognize is that a person who has lost a pet may go through the same emotional suffering as a person who has lost a parent, close relative, or friend.

There are five stages to grief. If a person understands these stages, it can help them cope with their loss and enable them to help others who are dealing with loss.

So what is Grief? Simply put, it is "a process of psychological, social and somatic reactions to the perception of loss." In 1991, the Grief Resource Foundation of Dallas, Texas, redefined grief as being "the total response of the organism to the process of change." In other words, any change produces a loss of some kind. If the loss is not significant, the grief reaction is minimal. The more significant the change, the greater the grief reaction.

Most of us consider our animals to be members of the family. There is no doubt that the death of a pet produces a very significant grief reaction. Although there are five stages of grief, not everyone experiences all five nor is there any specific order. Grieving is different for each individual.

The first stage is often denial. Denial occurs while your pet is still alive, when you receive the diagnosis of a terminal illness. Alternatively, if your pet dies suddenly, it is difficult to accept because you have had no time to prepare yourself for your loss.

On December 8th, 2007, Romeo was diagnosed with cancer. I was clearly in denial, and I began my crusade to help him. I was certain there was some treatment that would save my boy. I truly believed that Romeo was going to be that *one* dog to beat the odds. In a way, trying to find this miracle only fed my denial, but I have no regrets. Too quickly, his illness became a reality, and I could no longer deny he was dying. The last few days, I cried into his fur telling him how hard I had tried and that I was so sorry I let him down. I felt guilty!

Guilt is the second stage. At times, I honestly believed I was responsible for Romeo contracting cancer. Despite giving him a wonderful life of love and care, I could not let go of those feelings of "if only I would have, could have, should have." Each day it was becoming obvious to me what I had to do, but I did not want to play "God". In my heart, I knew helping Romeo cross the bridge would be my final gift and act of kindness. Regardless, I felt guilty, and no one was going to make me feel differently.

There were moments when I shifted from guilt to anger, the next stage of grief. I was angry with Romeo for leaving me. I would lie awake and tell him he was not supposed to leave me so soon, that there was still stuff for us to do. I was angry because I needed him. In many ways, Romeo was my rock, and he kept me grounded. My anger silently shifted to blaming my Veterinarian. Why didn't he diagnose this sooner? Why couldn't he save him? (The truth is my Vet really tried…he never lost hope.)

I would lie in bed at night, saying prayers. "Please God, I promise this and I promise that if you could please stop this disease." I was, in fact, bargaining…and that too, is part of the grieving process.

All my praying and *bargaining* was for naught. I eventually had to accept the fact that I was losing my boy. I cried, and I hurt. I physically hurt. I was depressed--very depressed.

Depression is the stage where you feel hopeless and helpless, and it is a period of extreme sadness. In hindsight, I had all the clinical signs of true depression. I couldn't sleep, I cried, I rarely ate, I cried some more, and my daily routine became impossible.

On January 18th, 2008, my gentle giant let me know he could no longer try for me. His soulful eyes told me he wanted to sleep. My husband and I lovingly helped him cross the bridge that afternoon.

Later that evening, I realized I had lost my companion. During these past few weeks, I've begun to accept my loss and have started to live a normal life. I still feel the pain and the sadness. I still feel guilty, I still have feelings of anger and blame, and, yes, I do get depressed at times…but with less intensity. My sadness may never go away completely. Romeo was my "special" dog, and I loved him best. But it is becoming more bearable now.

Continued on next page

In the movie *Cast Away*, Tom Hanks is marooned on an island for years with no hope of being rescued. A friend of mine, Pat Miller, CPDT, once said his character reminds us, "We have to remember to breathe, and then you begin to realize that the sun *will* come up every morning."

Grieving is a normal, natural, and healthy process. There is every reason to cry, and that, too, is normal and healthy. If your grief is unbearable and overwhelming, seek help. There are compassionate professional pet loss counselors and hotlines available to help you through your loss.

Hug those fur kids !

Only good things~ Helen

HELEN HOLLANDER, CPDT—*Helen graduated from Hofstra University with a degree in Psychology and later worked in the field of Special Education. Canine Behavior and training has always been Helen's hobby. Upon her children's graduation from High School, Helen switched professions to that of working with dogs on a professional level and furthering her education in Canine Behavior.*

Helen is a Certified Pet Dog Trainer and member of the Certification Council of Pet Dog Trainers, a Professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), a Certified Behavior Counselor through the Animal Behavior Center of New York. In addition, Helen serves as a Board member of the Nassau/Suffolk Owners Handlers Association and is a member of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America. In 2006, she became an AKC certified Evaluator for the CGC. Helen is a proactive advocate of dog-friendly, reward based training and is the owner of THE EDUCATED PUP, LLC, a private training and behavior counseling practice, located on Long Island, NY. In addition, Helen moderates an E-List that offers help for those people who own Shy/Aggressive Bernese Mt. Dogs. Email BerneseAggressiveandShy-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to join.

Helen presently shares her life with her well trained and understanding husband and three Bernese Mt. Dogs. When not counseling other peoples pets you can find Helen ringside, handling one of her Bernese in conformation.



Helen & Paxil



LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART

Memories are treasures
time cannot take away
So may we be surrounded
by happy ones today.
May all the love and tenderness
of days and years well spent
Come back today to fill our hearts
with beauty and content.
And may we walk down memory lane
and meet the ones we love
For while we cannot see them
they'll be watching from above.
So for their sakes be happy
and show them that their love
Has proven strong and big enough
to reach down from Above.

-- Author: Mattie Brainard

BARC BABIES & OTHER BERNERS AS THERAPY DOGS

I have owned dogs all my life--always "Working Dog" breeds--but it wasn't until I had my first Bernese Mountain Dog in 1997 that I truly understood the meaning of "Working Dog". My previous dogs were all pets that went for walks with us, played with us, and spent time at home. My first Berner, Beau, was severely orthopedically challenged and had behavioral issues. I had never had a dog that needed obedience training and, by chance, the closest reward-based training class I could find was through the local therapy group, CAP, the "Companion Animal Program" of Cape Cod. Little did I know then that my gimpy, bad boy, Beau, would pave the way for all of my future Berners to be Therapy Dogs.



Beth Schmoyer's Misha doing therapy work with a Sheltie

The Companion Animal Program of Cape Cod is modeled after TDI, Therapy Group International. All dogs in the program undergo a 6-week obedience class using reward-based training. I use "clickers" to train my dogs, marking the desired behavior with a "click" and a treat, which makes learning a positive experience for the dogs. Halley, my BARC girl, loves food and will eat almost anything. The obedience classes are structured to help the dogs pass the "Canine Good Citizen" test (CGC). To pass this test, they need to know basic obedience commands: sit, stay, down, heel, and come when called. They also need to walk on a loose lead (I know, it's a challenge for most, including mine), allow a friendly stranger to approach without shying away or covering them with kisses and slobber, allow the stranger to pet the dog, and walk through a crowd of strangers. They must also politely greet a strange dog, react appropriately to a distraction, such as dropping a chair, and endure a 3-minute separation from the owner who is out of sight. During this 3-minute separation, the dog can't whine, bark, or pace, but does not have to stay in a "sit" or" down". It really isn't as difficult as it may sound. Wrigley, my non-BARC problem child, passed the CGC test on his first try. Halley, my obedience and agility wonder, failed on her first try, but more about that later.

After passing the CGC test, the dogs are also required to pass a temperament test specifically geared to the type of facilities the dogs may be visiting: nursing homes, hospitals, special education facilities for children. They need to be confident around wheelchairs, walkers, etc. Bedpan-type objects are dropped to see if the dog is non-reactive. One of the most important commands, to me and to dogs doing therapy work, is the "leave it" command. This is not part of the CGC test, but was taught in our classes. It is invaluable in a nursing home situation where you can easily encounter food/pills/garbage on the floor that you don't want your dog to eat. My Halley loves food and will eat almost anything! Did I mention that previously?



Beth's Misha and pup, Kelsie, with nursing home patient, Leonard. Shelties are Hannah, Harry & Carly (on floor)

The day of the test, my main concern with Halley was "greeting a strange dog". Halley is, to say the least, impulsive, but I was completely confident about her obedience skills. We started with the CGC test—the "Sit, stay, down". Piece of cake, I think. Well, for some reason, my typically obedient Halley refused to down on command. "Halley, down". Nothing. The instructor knew us, knew what Halley could do, and allowed me to repeat the command (technically a no-no). Halley looked me in the eye, and then she looked away and refused to look at me. The instructor said, "I know she can do this." I agreed, but she failed the test anyway. She did pass with flying colors on her second try. That's my Halley; she lets me know *she* is the one in charge.

We currently visit 2 nursing homes and do the READ (Reading Assistance Education Dogs) program at the local library. While I originally started doing therapy work to give the dogs a job, it has become something immensely fulfilling for me as well. We have built connections with nursing home residents and their families. Can you imagine how happy I was to walk into a room, ask a resident if they wanted a visit with my dog, and have them say to me, "That's a Bernese Mountain Dog!" We listen to countless recollections about the dogs they used to have, the dogs they have loved, and the dogs they miss. We visit with people who can't see, and love the feel of that soft Berner fur in their fingertips. We visit people who can't get out of bed, yet who get immense joy having Halley (or Wrigs) lay their Berner heads beside them on their pillow. We do tricks. The simplest "give me your paw" or a "high five" delights the residents as much as if they were watching an Olympic competitor!

Continued on next page



Janice Parky & Halley with their READ girl, Annabella

Halley is my READ girl. The program is designed for children who need to build confidence in their reading skills. Reading aloud to one's peers can be a source of humiliation if you are not a good reader. The dogs are not judgmental. Anyone can read to them. The listen; they roll over on their backs for belly rubs; they snuggle. This helps build self-esteem in the young readers. Halley is in doggy heaven doing READ. We also perform some of her tricks, and we allow the kids to command her to do tricks. I always have treats for the kids to give her because, remember, Halley *loves* food!

Our library has the children chose books they want to read to the dogs. A number of dog related stories are always available. One of the most rewarding experiences we had with the READ program was with a young girl who came right over and snuggled up to Halley a bit hesitantly, but not overtly so. She read her story, stayed to pet and snuggle, and spent most of her time with Halley, ignoring the smaller dogs. I had the opportunity to meet her father a few weeks later, and I mentioned what a wonderful time Halley and I had with "Xena" reading at the library. He was completely flabbergasted. "Xena is terrified of dogs", he said, "especially big dogs". Halley is not Berner "big"; she is a mere 70 lbs., but she is still a sizable dog. When I described how Xena sought her out, read to her, petted her, and had her doing tricks, he couldn't believe me! Such is the power of a gentle Berner.

I believe all dogs have the capacity to bring out the best in most of the people they meet. I also believe that our BARC dogs, and all rescue dogs, have a special quality that allows people to open up to them. People who meet Halley always say she is "special", which intrigues me. She isn't "special" because she is typey; she doesn't have multiple titles after her name; and she can be one bossy bitch. But I think people can sense how happy to be here, happy to be loved, happy to be of service to others she is. That's my girl!

Written by Janice Parky, BARC mom to Halley and her brother, Wrigley.



Therapy Dogs International (TDI) 2005 Christmas card with Beth's Misha

HELPING BERNERS IN NEED

~ BARC NOTE CARDS ~

Marilynn Blake has designed and produced 2 lovely sets of BARC note cards. Each set consists of 6 cards that are blank inside, allowing you to write your own message, and 6 envelopes. Each card has a beautiful picture of a BARC rescue.

SET 1:





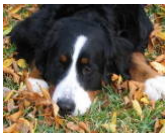



The cost of 1 set is $15.00, and the cost of 2 or more sets is $10.00 per set. All proceeds go to BARC to continue their rescue efforts of saving Berners from puppymills and auctions. Check out BARC Baby Projects at http://s87.photobucket.com/albums/k129/BARCINC/.

SET 2:








Please make your check payable to "BARC", and mail to Marilynn Blake at 4362 Sheridan Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55412, with a note saying which set of cards you are ordering, and the quantities of each. Email Marilynn at MBlake1595@cs.com for more info.

~ FUNDRAISING ~



Joye Neff, affectionately known as The Queen of Berner Fundraising, tirelessly organizes and runs a multitude of fundraisers throughout the year aimed at helping a number of causes for our beloved Bernese Mountain Dogs. Since 1998, Joye has been instrumental in raising well over $300,000.

Click on the "Joye Neff Fundraiser" button on the Bernese Mountain Dog Fundraisers website (http://www.bmdfundraiser.org/) to see information about the current fundraiser being held. The website also lists all the different types of Berner fundraisers… check them out.

Joye has a general schedule in place, but sometimes fundraising dates are subject to change bearing an emergency need. Upcoming fundraisers are for BEHAF (emergency fundraiser) from mid March until end of April, Willem Wijnberg AKC CHF Cancer Fundraiser through May/June, and BARC during the summer months.

Joye is always happy to accept donations of items and of money for the various fundraisers!! Please e-mail Joye at wbneff@pitt.edu if you can help in some way. All Berners will thank you!

THE LAST BARC — MARCH PHOTO CAPTION CHALLENGE



The Photo Caption Challenge has returned for March! Picture is randomly chosen out of the BARC Photobucket.

So all you creative, witty people out there, here's your chance to have some fun.

Email your photo caption to Lisa Hawes, Newsletter Editor (address on page 3) by May 1st, 2008.

The top 5 captions as chosen by the Newsletter Staff will be published in the next issue, along with a new challenge.

Enjoy!! Have fun!!