

Miniature Saint Bernards

If you like the look of the Saint Bernard, but not his size, other breeds might appeal to you.

By Allan Reznik

Q. What do you know about miniature breeds? I read an article about miniature Saint Bernards. Is this a bad thing?

A. I am dismayed to hear that some people are attempting to scale down the noble Saint Bernard. This is a ridiculous and harmful idea, and one that I suspect is being attempted by those who have little knowledge of genetics and animal husbandry.

The American Kennel Club recognizes 160 different breeds of dogs. The United Kennel Club recognizes three times that many. Surely those hundreds of dog breeds would allow for anyone to find the right dog for them in terms of size, appearance, exercise needs and temperament.

If you are a fan of the Saint Bernard's hang-dog look but do not have the room for a giant breed, the low-to-the-ground Basset Hound, Clumber Spaniel or Sussex Spaniel might appeal to you ... provided you researched these breeds thoroughly and appreciated their individual qualities.

Any deliberate breeding that focuses on one characteristic – for instance, small size, in the case of a miniaturized Saint Bernard – while ignoring other structural and health issues can produce harmful results.

I encourage you to research dog breeds, attend dog shows to meet with knowledgeable breeders, and find the breed that suits you best. Fads, by their very nature, come and go. Let's hope the fad of scaling down dog breeds goes away very quickly.