

Herding Dogs as Pets

Fanciers explore whether herding dogs make good matches for pet owners.

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I don't know that there is a "secret" to working with pet people as much as an understanding that some people will still provide a great home even if they don't want to show the dog. This comes from teaching new owners how to care for their new pet, and staying in contact with one another breeder and owner for at least the first couple of years.

Elizabeth Hayes Bearded Collie Club of America With roughly three inquiries per week, most are drawn to the breed for its fun-loving, happy, "shaggy dog" appearance. But well over half of inquiries come from former owners.

I generally refer people to our club breeder list and if the inquirer does not have Internet access, I mail them a letter with the listings. In the past eight or nine months, I've noticed a decrease in phone calls. People often confuse Beardies with Border Collies sometimes even Beagles!

I tell people this is a high-energy dog that needs to be a family dog and needs plenty of exercise at least an hour in the morning and an hour at night. The right home has people who are around during the day. A Beardie will find things to do if left unoccupied. One of mine actually un-potted all of my plants one time!

I also stress grooming two to three times a week, and that Beardies will try to herd small children. When kids get excited, the dogs get excited. Their interaction must be supervised. I try to discourage people from getting a Beardie if the children are under four years of age.

To be honest, I let breeders deal with most of the pet people, since I am not a breeder myself. So I'm not really sure what the secret to working with pet people is.

Judith M. Bradley American Belgian Tervuren Club, Inc. On average I receive about eight phone calls and 10 e-mails a month (total 18 inquiries). Generally when people see photos of this breed, they think they are so beautiful and want to have one without knowledge of the breed's temperament, coat care, socialization needs or size. Folks definitely need to know that this is not a breed for everyone, as they are high-energy dogs, always needing a job. Many pet people also do not understand the need to socialize a puppy that this breed does not make a good kennel dog. They must be part of the family.

The ideal owner understands the unique nature of the Belgian Tervuren: their history, purpose, intensity, humor and activity level. That same owner would have researched health issues, correct temperament and socialization required. They would provide for their devoted companion a fenced-in yard for safety and time for training. Tervs need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies. They would also agree to provide good nutrition and veterinary care (including spay/neuter), proper grooming and lots of love.