

SAINTS IN THE ROCKIES

Membership Applications

If you haven't gotten in your completed membership application (filled out application form, signature on the last page, and dues paid via Venmo or check), please do so as soon as possible.

Applications can be requested from Jen Mehle,
jen@thunderkeg.com

Community Outreach

AKC requires a certain amount of documented community outreach prior to provisional and permanent approval. Any members willing to host a meet the breeds at their local shows or event, please let Doyleene Roberts know.

CHIC Club

If you have a CHIC saint, contact Katie
hicountrysaints@gmail.com.

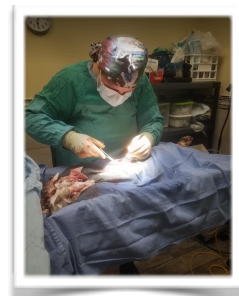
We will have something special for our members that do the SBCA recommended health tests to gain a CHIC certification on their saints.



A Logical Approach To Health Testing

by Nichole Whitfill, DVM

Within our national club, the Saint Bernard Club of America, the issue of health testing has been on the forefront over the past couple of weeks. There has been a lot of talk about the importance or lack thereof, of testing. There are a lot of feelings within our breed when it comes to this specific topic. There is a lot of lashing out and a lot of misinformation being spread. So this article is meant to help clarify some of the major things that are said or heard within our fancy.



What are our recommended health tests?

Health Clinics

Upcoming OFA Health Clinics:

<https://www.ofa.org/health-clinics>

Fundraising Donations

Members willing to donate items for RMSBC to silent auction off, please contact Jose
jose.a.hernandezgil@gmail.com .

May General Membership Meeting Notice

RMSBC's next general membership meeting will be held via Zoom on May 11th, 7PM Mountain Time. Please join us! Katie will be sending out the Zoom information soon.

1.OFA Hips (minimum age 24 months) or PennHip Evaluation (minimum 24 months)

-PennHip certified veterinarians: <https://antechimagingservices.com/antechweb/locate-a-pennhip-veterinarian>

2.OFA Elbows (minimum age 24 months)

3.Eye Examination (minimum age 22 months)

-Must be performed by a Boarded Ophthalmologist

-Look up at <https://www.acvo.org/ophthalmologist-search>

4.Cardiac Evaluation (minimum age 24 months)

-Options: Congenital Cardiac, Advanced cardiac, or Basic Cardiac

-Must be performed by a Boarded Cardiologist

-Look up at <https://vetspecialists.com>

5.Degenerative Myelopathy

6.Autoimmune thyroiditis (optional but recommended)

7.Honorable mention is Laryngeal Paralysis and Polyneuropathy. While it is not included in recommended testing, it is a disease that is easy to test for and would help provide more information.

Why do we recommend these health tests?

These are the most common health issues we see in our breed.

We currently sit at number 7 on the OFA chart for worst hip dysplasia. We test hips and elbows to look for hip and elbow dysplasia.

We test eyes to look for juvenile cataracts, debilitating entropion or ectropion, to make sure there are no abnormalities that could effect the vision of our dog that they could pass onto offspring.

Cardiac evaluations look for how well the heart is working. Are the muscles the appropriate thickness? Is there a murmur? Any abnormalities in the function of the heart that could be spread to offspring.

Degenerative Myelopathy is a progressive disease of the spinal cord which typically occurs in our older dogs and causes the dog to not be able to lift the rear end and if they last long enough it does eventually lead to paralysis to the front end as well.

Autoimmune thyroiditis is the most common cause of primary hypothyroidism in dogs.

Laryngeal Paralysis and polyneuropathy is a neuromuscular disease that cause paralysis of the laryngeal folds which can make it difficult for dogs to breath and when they get too worked up can cause death if not treated immediately. In Saint Bernards there is often muscle wasting in the hind end as well. For these reasons, is why it is recommended to test your dogs.

Common Reasons Our Fanciers Claim To Not Health Test

- “I know my line.”
- “It’s not a problem in Saints.”
- “No matter what we do, they will have these issues.”
- “I don’t need to pay OFA to tell me what I already know.”
- “It is a waste of money.”

- “I’ve never had an issue before.”

Fallacies in the Common Reasons

All of these health tests, that are recommended are actual issues. There is a reason these tests are recommended.

You don’t know every single dog in your line’s history, there is simply no way. You can tell back to a distance but there was also a time before health testing was a thing and animals died and we didn’t have a way to know.



You may not believe that you have had an issue before, or it just may not have happened to you yet. But there could come a day when you get bit in the rear over something you could have been prepared for with common health testing.

You cannot tell what is going on beneath the surface. No matter how much you think you know, without looking, you simply cannot tell.

It is not a waste of money. Please do not think that. There are health clinics at shows where you can test for a fraction of the cost if you can get there. But even if you cannot get to a show with a clinic, the price you pay for testing is worth it for peace of mind, for knowing what you are dealing with, and being able to make informed decisions.

We do not need to have these common issues forever. We can improve if we get everyone on the same page. It is said commonly that they are giant breed dogs and will have issues with hips. But what about Great Danes, Mastiffs, German Shepherds, Wolfhounds, Newfoundlands, etc that have taken initiative and have dropped from the list of top 10 worst

hips? These clubs have made a statement to do better, to be better, and as a breed they each have improved. We can do the same! If they can, we can! We as a club, just need to be willing to.

How Do I Utilize Health Testing Results?

Within our fancy, many folks seem to believe that testing means all or nothing. But this is so far from the truth. Testing gives you information. It gives you the building blocks to know what you are dealing with. It allows to see what you are working with.

For example, lets talk about hip dysplasia. Hip Dysplasia is a multi-factorial disease. This means things like genetics, environment, and nutrition all play a role in the development or lack thereof of hip dysplasia. You must consider all factors in order to reach the greatest potential. With hip dysplasia you should look vertically and horizontally. What does this mean? Simply that you need to look at the parents, grandparents, great grandparents AND siblings. Say both parents test good. But every one of their siblings were moderate. This would say that maybe those parents are the exception to the norm for this group. And your likelihood of having passing hips will be less. Or on the other hand, your pup comes back as moderate but their 6 other siblings come back as good or excellent. Maybe your pup is the exception in that case. And even if you breed this dog the likelihood of passing hips is more likely.

How do I use that information? Well every persons priorities will be different. If you have horrible crippling hips in your kennel, then you may decide to withhold breeding a dog who has hip dysplasia across the board as in the first example. Or you may want to breed to a dog who only has good hips to try and mitigate the likelihood that those hips will not pass. With the second example you see that you have moderate hips on your dog but the rest of the siblings and parents have good hips. You may say, well my dog is definitely the exception and I am comfortable breeding that dog because the likelihood based on vertical and horizontal testing shows me that I have a better chance of producing passing hips.

There is actually a 2014 Finnish study that shows that the genetic trends for hip and elbow dysplasia have improved the most in Saint Bernards. (<https://www.kennelliitto.fi/en/about-us/notices/frequency-canine-hip-and-elbow-dysplasia-decreasing-finland>)

“Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.” This is a commonly used phrase and for good reason. You don’t want to cull a dog for just any specific reason. If you have a quality St Bernard, who passes their hearts, eyes, elbows, DM, excellent temperament, but has mild hips. Then that is a specimen you want to keep in the gene pool. However, you want to breed up. If all those things come back normal except hips, then strive to breed to a good or excellent rated dog that compliments yours so that your likelihood of improving your dogs is higher. You don’t want to turn around and breed to a severe dog, because that would be breeding down. We as breeders and fanciers should always be striving to do better, to improve, and not to digress.

Lets talk about big issues that are in fact detrimental and should be highly considered when it comes to breeding. These would include things like DCM or any other heart issue, epilepsy, and temperament. If you have a dog that develops epilepsy at 2 years of age, this is not a dog you want to breed. If you have lines that have DCM where the dogs are dying regularly at 5 years of age, you do not want to continue breeding to this line. These are detrimental health issues. Temperament, while not something we readily test for in our breed, is essential. And aggression does have a genetic component so this is another one that should be put in this category. We do want to cull these specimens from our breeding programs for the betterment and protection of the breed.

Essentially, we do not want to double up on “bad” genes. And health testing lets us be aware. Such as DM. If you have a carrier, you should not breed to a carrier because you will have 50% affected offspring. Laryngeal Paralysis and Polyneuropathy is the same. You do not want to breed a dog with heart issues to a dog with epilepsy. You are doubling up the bad genes in this type of case.

Breeder Decisions

Ultimately, the choice is up to you as the breeder. You need to sit down and think about what you want to improve on. What issues do you see in your line? Do you have an issue with hearts? Great, maybe you focus just on heart health first and foremost. Oh, your hips are horrible? Maybe you consider only breeding dogs with passing hips and breeding only to lines of dogs with passing hips to improve your kennel. No single person can make that decision. It is your right and responsibility to decide what you can do to better the breed and better your line. Be honest. Be true. Don’t hide those non passing scores as they are so important.

How Can We As a Fancy Do Better?

The biggest issue that I see within the Saint Bernard Club of America is how judgmental our fanciers are. You are damned if you do and damned if you don’t. We should support one another, encourage one another. I encourage everyone to look. I want to borrow a quote that really is the heart of where we are trying to go, from fellow club member Kristen Scott, “There will be passing scores. There will be failing scores. I celebrate you both because you looked.”. This is what every single one of us should strive for. Do not talk bad about someone who is actually looking, lift them up instead. Discuss with them how to improve. The only way we can increase the number of people who will health test is by making people feel safe. The only way we will improve our breed is by the ENTIRE fancy getting on board and seeing the importance of health testing and how it can make our beautiful breed so much better and healthier.

Overall, we need to have a systematic and logical approach to breeding. We are not expected to be perfect, but we should ask more of ourselves, and strive to do the best we can. As reputable breeders, we should be health testing. We cannot preach to backyard breeders, that they can't breed because they haven't done proper health testing, when 90% of our fancy does not yet claims to be reputable breeders. You cannot be a reputable breeder if you are willing to keep your head in the sand.

These viewpoints are all my own. You may disagree with me on these topics and that is ok. I just want to get you thinking, and maybe show you that health testing is not scary and can be very beneficial. One day I want to be able to say that I am so proud of our fanciers, that we CHOSE to make a difference and come out of the dark age. If you have any questions, comments, or want to chat with me, I am always willing to message you and discuss.

Human Puppies

by: Kristen Scott, AKC Juniors Judge

It takes a lot of work to train a show dog. It takes even more work to teach a junior. You have to figure out how to put your knowledge into words and effectively communicate it possibly to a young child. I know what works for me, but how do I put my action into words to teach another person to do it? Since I was three years old, I have shown. Being the 3rd generation in my family to show dogs, I had a lot of teachers. I just looked back on my teachings with them and picked out what worked for me to try first.

My first junior was a young man, and I only had been out of juniors myself for three years. He got a puppy from me and wanted to get into AKC dog sports. I took him with me to shows and quickly figured out a novice junior and a young puppy were a hard match to learn together. What did my mentor do for me? Ah! She gave me a trained dog first to train me on the basics. So I signed him onto my current special Bruce and had him show Bruce while still showing his puppy in the breed. Bruce taught him the basics and gave him a few humbling experiences, but overall his handling skills had room to grow because he wasn't trying to teach a puppy what he was also trying to learn. He learned the skill on Bruce, and then once he understood it, he taught his puppy it.

My following two juniors came in simultaneously—two young ladies of similar age but different skillsets and personalities. One junior had been showing for a little bit, and I offered to her to come to try out a Saint to expand her skills. I had her come out and try a couple of dogs in practice, and she landed on my friend's saint Gypsy. We learned with time that Gypsy was great for specialties, but she didn't have the stamina to show at the all-breed shows. So she started showing Bruce. The other young lady was my niece, who sparked an interest in showing. My niece was green and very low on self-confidence, so I had her show my former junior's dog, Pink. Pink was more trained than anything and had enough self-confidence for every person in the ring. Pink made my niece comfortable in the ring because if she messed up, Pink fixed herself. She showed Pink just enough to gain confidence and went into the all breeds with a very chill dog named Vixen. She later got a saint puppy and trained it to be a fabulous show dog.

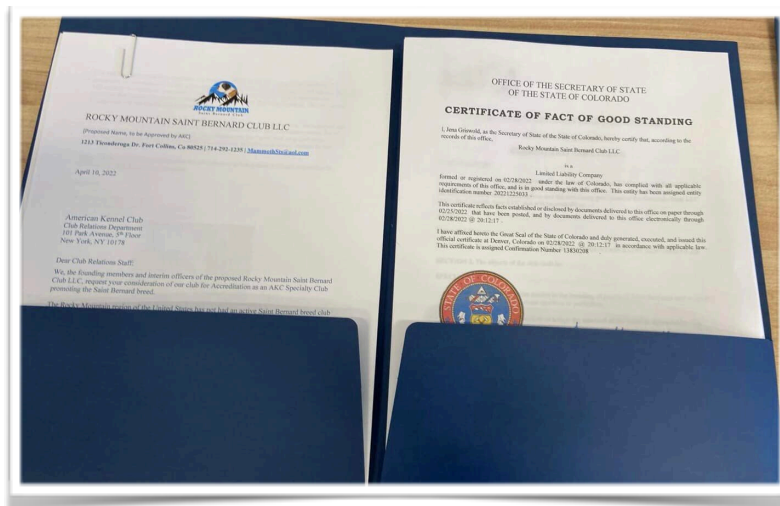


A 3rd young lady has joined our village and has been learning with one of my dogs named Desi for the past year. She has a background with Aussies but fell in love with the saints at handling class (where we all train weekly). So I offered for her to come to play with us. She is still learning the ropes but enjoying the ride. All three girls love their company and sportsmanship together. In the ring, they are competitors; outside of the ring, they are best friends.

The biggest thing I have found in successfully mentoring juniors is having a dog who wants to work for their person. They will not make outstanding junior dogs if they hate showing. Give the newbies a trained dog to learn on, so they learn the behaviors they want and how to execute them. Then they can teach their following dogs. And the thing that makes every handler better, PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE. Tune in their skills by class every week and 10 min practice sessions at home every day. I watch my kids at the shows, tell them ONE thing they can do better next time, and then praise the rest of their performance. If they want to try a new skill, practice it in class and see how it goes. The biggest thing is to be their cheerleader on the days they win a ribbon, on the days they don't, on the days their dog is perfect, and on the days where things could have gone better. Love them and cheer them on, no matter what.

AKC Application Submitted!

We have officially submitted our application to AKC's Club Development Team. This is a HUGE step for RMSBC. The hope is to hear back their decision some time in the next month. Everyone owes our very



own Doylene Roberts a massive thank you for her hard work in getting the paperwork put together and submitted in a timely fashion. Our first general membership Zoom meeting was well attended and we easily had a quorum for passing our Club's by-laws. I'd like to thank everyone for taking the time to attend and also thank everyone who has volunteered to donate time to our various committees. Big things lie ahead for RMSBC.