

# WHY RESCUE? A BREEDERS PERSPECTIVE

By Terri Ann Votava, Sans Branco Belgians

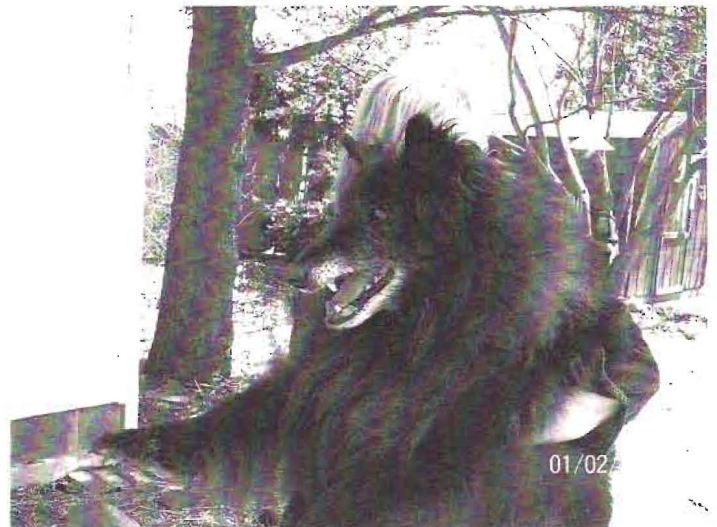
If you look at virtually any breeder's website or listen to them talk, they discuss a responsibility for the breed and the breed standard. It is our job to breed puppies so that they come as close to the standard as possible. This then takes most breeders off on the tangent of being the protector of the breed. You readily see this if you are a new person trying to purchase your first Belgian. There are questionnaires, or the verbal interrogation about the type of home you will provide, your commitment etc., then there is discussion of returning the dog to the breeder should become unable to keep it. Rescue becomes a reality for one of three reasons, the person can't remember where they purchased their dog and/or lost contact, the second being the breeder was contacted and chooses not to take the dog back for a variety of reasons (no room, puppies on the ground, the animal is spayed or neutered and therefore not of breeding value, or they really just don't want to be bothered) and the third reason is that the owner does not want the dog returned to the breeder under any circumstances (ex. the dog has seizures, so the breeder wants it euthanized, the breeder has been very unkind or uninterested throughout the peoples involvement or there has been a personality clash). Whatever the reason, it then falls on the other breeders and volunteers to care for those dogs of our chosen breed to be involved in rescue. Rescue is the moving of Belgian Sheepdogs from points of potential harm to one of safety and to hopefully forever homes where they will be cherished members of the family.

So, why rescue? It is potentially one of the most fulfilling ways of giving back to our breed and for starting new people in the breed. Many families want a family pet and the price of a BSD puppy is rather steep with the average being \$1000.00. When families are thinking about the kids in school, shoes etc., that price might well be higher than they can afford and some breeders are not willing to negotiate or do time payments. Some folks find taking in a rescue more to their liking. All in all when you work with rescue it is a very rewarding affair. As a breeder, I like the fact that if for some reason and at some point in time I would not be able to take in one of my kids, that the rescue network is there to be used. I will feel that I have put in my dues by working in rescue and that if I should ever need the service that I would not be a burden upon the Trust but just reaping some of what I have had the privilege to sow.

So as a breeder why would I work and volunteer in rescue? I always take care of my own puppies for rehome; all of mine are microchipped so I would know if one were to end up needing help; I have a chat group of all my puppy people but six from the last 18 years and can account for all of my kids. Well, rescue is my way of paying back to the breed and to the breeders who helped me along the way. Rescue is needed because some folks truly can't remember where they got their dog. Some purchased them from less than reputable breeders who would not take them back, and some days poop just happens and folks need help. Am

I altruistic? Probably—I am a nurse by background from the days when you graduated with a bachelor's degree you still did not make \$4.00 an hour and, no it was not the dark ages, just 1975. There are the days that rescue makes you feel like you are on top of the world. An almost 12-14 year old male is identified in a kill shelter in Tennessee. Everyone takes the job to heart: a volunteer in Nashville id's the dog as a purebred; the rescue coordinator works with the shelter to set the wheels in motion for a release to rescue and to find a foster home that knows this might be a forever foster because of age; the rescue chair stays up all night and does the paperwork required to be a recognized rescue group by the shelter; the volunteer who id's volunteers to foster the boy knowing it could be forever. Luckily he comes back heartworm negative and all the pieces fall in place and this wonderful old boy is out of the shelter in 24 hours and within weeks he is also transported to his new forever home in Illinois. His new mom is crazy about him and he is about her. Could still bring a tear to your eye when they send you an e-mail and tell you how wonderful he is doing. See the number of people involved in rescue who are just as caring and believing in this wonderful breed as you are, and there is really no question as to why I work in rescue.

There are the days that rescue just drains you. No matter what you try to do you just can't save them all. Some are coming with bite histories and are therefore not adoptable, some are so sick and emaciated that you throw up on the way home from the smell in your vehicle and try to figure how you will ever get the stench out. There are the days when you are just five minutes too late because they changed the euthanasia day. Finally there are the days that you really question, why you work in rescue until those stinking, foul smelling parvo puppies start to pull through and recognize you and begin to wag their tails at the first people they can truly trust and then there is no question why you work in rescue. 🐾



Older rescue with "neutered" coat. Please read more about identifying Belgians on page 44.