



EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO ASK ABOUT OWNING A BASSET GRIFFON VENDEËN

When prospective buyers ask about the breed, questions tend to be similar or fall into certain categories. So here are answers to all those questions you might have wanted to ask about Petits or Grands Bassets Griffons Vendéens!

TEMPERAMENT

What is a BGV really like? Both types are active, curious, busy, happy, alert, independent and intelligent. They are willing to please, affectionate and demand attention. Although stronger, GBGVs are probably more laid back than their busier, livelier, smaller cousins, the PBGVs. As scenthounds, they are pack animals so happy with others of their own kind.

TRAINING

Can you train them? With understanding and time, BGVs are not hard to train, although the Grand does need firm handling. The bonus is that they have a desire to please. The level of learning depends on the amount of time you can devote. But remember that these are scenthounds. If they get on the trail of something, they will become deaf to your calls and only return when ready.

What can you train them to do? House-training and basic obedience to learn good manners come first. Today BGVs are not only show dogs. With extra training, many compete successfully in other events such as obedience, tracking, agility trials and heelwork to music. A few are used in Search and Rescue and as Therapy dogs. Some are achieving high standards in the Kennel Club Good Citizen Dog Scheme.

Do they bark much? Most BGVs only bark if they have a reason to. They do not just bark for nothing.

Are they destructive? A bored or lonely BGV will make his own entertainment. A variety of safe toys, things to chew on and a safe environment will lessen the opportunity for him to be destructive and prevent problems. A crate is useful - your BGV's special place where he feels secure for a short period of time. Leave the door open for him to get used to it.

Are they good with children? BGVs generally love everyone and have a natural affinity with children. Some children compete with them in Young Kennel Club handling competitions at shows. But, as with any dog, you should *never* leave a young child and your pet together unattended and do not allow teasing as this will provoke an undesirable reaction.

Can you let them off the lead? Many say "Don't let your BGV off the lead". It depends on the nature of the particular dog, also on early training. If you decide to let yours run free, do it in an area well away from roads or sheep or other farm animals - and preferably in one that is enclosed. Encourage him to return from short distances, offering a treat as a reward. Remember that the hunting instinct is very strong and noses do tend to take over from their brains. One small scent and your hunter will be off on the chase. If you stand your ground, he will eventually return - but how long are you prepared to wait? Flexi-leads are a good alternative!

THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Will I need a fenced back garden? To be worry-free when your BGV is in the garden you need a secure fence, ideally about 2 metres (6 feet) high. And some BGVs dig, so consider putting wire netting at an L shape down the bottom of the fencing and buried into the ground. If your BGV digs into the ground, his nails will meet the netting. Check your boundaries regularly as, if an animal (such as a fox) digs in, your dog will have a way out.

Can a BGV live in a flat or without a garden? This isn't the ideal situation. A ground floor flat with access to a garden presents no problem. But anyone living higher up must consider seriously if this is fair on the dog. Can you give him regular exercise or allow roaming free? A BGV needs lots of exercise and just taking the dog out on a lead to relieve himself is not sufficient. Numerous long walks each day would be needed at a bare minimum and putting your shoes and coat on to take the dog out in all weathers, especially before bed, during the night or early morning, is hardly ideal.

If I want more than one, would they get along together? Would a BGV settle with my current family pet? For fans of the breed, one BGV is wonderful, two an absolute joy. They provide mutual company and entertainment. However, if you want more than one, consider waiting or varying their ages. Otherwise, in years to come, you will have two old ones with the attendant problems and likely upset. If you have another breed already, a new BGV introduced on neutral ground will invariably be sociable and your existing family dog will be taking his new friend back to his home. They also normally befriend other family pets or dogs entering their home.

GROOMING

How do I care for a BGV's coat? His coat should be thick, harsh and somewhat casual looking. A weekly brushing will remove loose and dead hair. A pin brush, comb and possibly a mat breaker, which will help remove any little knots, are the only necessary tools. Bathe him as necessary.

What about other grooming? Nails need clipping regularly and ear canals kept free of excess hair and wax. Teeth need regular care to be kept clean and free of tartar. Trim long hair under the feet and check between the pads for unwanted material or mats. And, if you show your dog, or want to keep him looking characteristic of the breed, there is a lot more to it! As a minimum, keeping that unrefined, rustic look means - making sure there is no excess hair covering the eyes, removing long, untidy hair from the ends of the ears and keeping the feet tidy. You can achieve this, and tidying up the body, by plucking hair out with finger and thumb or using a stripping knife. The breeder will be pleased to show you how to do this.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Are BGVs healthy? Both the PBGV and GBGV suffer from the usual 'doggy' health problems, most of which can be prevented by prompt veterinary attention, such as antibiotics. When thinking about more serious ailments, in general both are extremely healthy breeds. However, it is always wise to consider insurance to cover any unexpected illnesses or accidents.

Are there any specific health problems that I should be concerned about? Any breed can be subject to genetic and/or birth defects. A few conditions have been reported in BGVs such as steroid responsive meningitis, craniomandibular osteopathy (a defect of jaw growth at early age), heart murmurs, pancreatitis, epilepsy and some eye conditions. The BGV Club committee monitors all these extremely carefully, especially the known slight incidence of epilepsy and, in PBGVs, primary open angled glaucoma. Routine eye testing has been the norm however, following detection of the mutant gene causing POAG, since early 2015 PBGV owners worldwide have their PBGVs' DNA tested. Also, all BGV Club breeders now have their puppies DNA tested (unless breeding clear to clear when the puppies will be hereditary clear). Before you buy, talk to the breeder if you have any concerns about health issues. Ask for evidence of eye or DNA testing of sire and dam and, when buying, get certification of current good health of the puppy. Ask your own vet to examine your puppy to confirm that it is healthy and has no heart, eye, ear or other abnormalities.

What is the life expectancy? You should expect an average life span of 14 years or more.

What do BGVs eat? BGVs are easy to feed. Giving the recommended amount of a good quality dog food (either complete or canned) and a small quantity of dog treats will normally satisfy nutritional needs. Supplements or special foods should be used only on the recommendation of your vet.

OBTAINING A BGV

Where can I find a puppy if I decide to buy a BGV? Any of the following reputable sources will be pleased to help:

- The BGV Club Secretary – Linda Skerritt, tel 01375 673922, e-mail monkhams@aol.com
- The Breeders Directory on the BGV Club website, www.bgvclub.co.uk/breeders
- The BGV Club Welfare/Rescue Co-ordinator - Fiona Buchanan, tel 01567 820603, e-mail tarmachangbgv@gmail.com
- The Kennel Club's Assured Breeder Scheme - www.thekennelclub.org.uk/services/public/acbr/Default.aspx

Is it possible to get an older, already trained dog? Sometimes through personal circumstances, a dog needs to be rehomed or breeders have older dogs they are prepared to let go. Most breeders stay in touch with the new owners, who become good friends, and they still occasionally see the BGVs who were a part of their lives. The Club Welfare/Rescue Co-ordinator will know if there are any BGVs looking for a home.

Can I see BGVs at dog shows? Smaller "open" shows often have breed classes but greater numbers can be seen at the larger "championship" shows or at the BGV Club's own shows. If you want to exhibit, visiting shows is a good way to get a feel for the breed and gives the opportunity to talk to breeders. Venues and dates are listed by the Kennel Club on www.thekennelclub.org.uk/services/public/findashow/. BGV Club shows appear on www.bgvclub.co.uk/diary-dates.

BOOKS AVAILABLE

The most recent in-depth PBGV book is **Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen: A Definitive Study** by Valerie Link and Linda Skerritt, Doral Publishing, 1999, ISBN 0-94485580. The authors obtained previously unexamined kennel records, albums and archives. They chart in-depth early days of the breed in prominent countries, with detailed information and hitherto unseen photos.

A good source of information is the book **Understanding the Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen: Rustic French Hound** by Kitty Steidel, Orient Publications, 1987. The ISBN is 0-9618117-0-6. Written when the breed was in its infancy in the States, this book gives general history and standards, discusses training and day to day care. It is informative, interesting and easy to read.

For general dog-care, American Jeffrey Pepper has authored three books on the **Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen**. The first was produced by TFH Publications, 1993, ISBN is 0-86622-578-1. It gives advice on selecting and caring for a PBGV. The second, published by Interpet, appeared in 2001, ISBN 1-903098-00-8. With charming photos, this too explains about care of your PBGV. The third, a limited edition, published by Kennel Club Books in 2005, ISBN 1-593783108, gives a comprehensive owner's guide to PBGVs.

In 2003, a privately printed book made an appearance. **This is the Grand Basset Griffon Vendéen** by Vivien Phillips charts the breed's ancestry and its early history in the UK. It is updated regularly and is available from her on 01442 851225, vphillips@btinternet.com.

Finally, following issue of **Meet the Basset Breeds** in 2004, a second edition appeared. This contains never-before seen historical documents and photos of all basset breeds, including PBGV and GBGV information and breeder ads. This privately produced book is available from author Linda Skerritt on 01375 673922, monkhams@aol.com.

