

MISINTERPRETATION OF "SAINT" STANDARD

BY: PATRICIA J WIGGINS / JUDGE

I have a couple of points I would like to make perfectly clear! When I have been in Switzerland (and I shall return again this year) I have never seen many Saint Bernards that were over 29 (twenty-nine) inches in height. (Marlene Anderson carried around a tape-measure when she was there!) I visited every kennel, including the one commercial kennel in that country.

The Swiss Saint Bernards have never been 36 (thirty-six) inches tall, yet they have been used for rescue work since the 1800's. The great Barri was credited with saving over 40 (forty) lives, and today he may be viewed at the Museum in Berne--a shorthaired, pale-yellow-colored dog, who never had his hips X-rayed. Only the shorthaired dogs (which were the original Saint Bernard) were used in rescue work--as the longhaired were found to be most unsuitable.

Of the numerous dogs seen, there were few exceptions to color, almost all ranged from a honey to tan. I did see a few that were darker. In Italy, at Count Morsiani's kennel, some of the dogs have deeper coloring and are larger. Germany and Holland also have some larger ones. However, in this instance I am concentrating on the Swiss dogs, for that is the land of the origin of the breed, and also there are individuals in this country who feel that this breed has to be gigantically tall and unbalanced in body, have the head of a Borzoi and be mahogany in color---else these persons feel, the snow will swallow the dogs. I have imported several Saint Bernards over the years, and all won under all-breed and specialty judges alike, regardless of color and size.

Ever watched a European judge at work in the ring? Ever talked to one? They are not interested in soundness---only "type" is important. I am not saying I am in agreement with this, but it is interesting to note, and also bear in mind, that none of the Monastery Rescue Dogs were ever X-rayed, and they worked in blizzards to which there is no comparison. None of the European dogs are X-rayed today, although there has been talk from time to time; however, the breeders are extremely opposed to this. It has also been proved over a period of numerous years that the shorthaired Saint Bernard is the one that carries the "type."

To be biased by what is in one's own home is ignorance. Pets are always in demand--and should be--they are wonderful in that capacity, but should not be "shown" except in Obedience work. Being misinformed is something else, as there is a Standard to which one can refer. It is written so that it is impossible for there to be different interpretations, and it is accompanied by illustrations of what the correct and incorrect Saint Bernard looks like.

I still maintain that the best Saint Bernards being produced in the world today are right here in the United States, and they are being produced by those breeders that are following the Standard.