



The Rolin Ridge Puppy Care Manual

*by
Linda M. McCarty*

*9368 Sarah Shelton Lane
Mechanicsville, Virginia 23116
804 730-8538*

*The
Rolin Ridge
Puppy Care
Manual*

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*Introducing
Your Puppy*

Registered name _____

Call name _____

Birth date _____

AKC Litter Number _____

AKC Registration Number _____

Welcome Home

The day you bring a new puppy into your home will be an exhausting one for you, and it certainly will be for him. It is also one of the most critical moments in your relationship, because first impressions are indelibly marked on the animal mind. It is vital to establish, from the beginning, an atmosphere of security, affection and mutual confidence.

Your Puppy and Older Dogs

Introducing your new dog to older, established animals should be handled with caution. While most animals take readily to a young puppy, some will view him as an intruder. The two are best introduced on neutral territory, and you must take care to see that the older animals do not frighten or hurt the new puppy.

Make a point of lavishing affection on the older animals so they will not be unduly jealous of the attention paid to the newcomer. If you notice any signs of hostility, keep the older dogs and puppy separated until you see signs of overt friendliness from the older animals.

The First Few Nights

The first few nights in a new home can be a miserable experience for a puppy who is used to sleeping in the cozy nest with his litter mates.

In the wild, when young cubs are isolated from their pack, they become very emotional and begin whining, barking or howling. If they are hung up in the brush, they'll dig and chew to free themselves and be reunited with the pack. These behaviors are genetically based and increase the chances of survival.

Do not scold your puppy at first for crying at night. Instead, reassure him. Crying is a perfectly normal reaction, under the circumstances. The first few nights call for greater indulgence.

***Feeding
Instructions***

Your puppy/dog is being fed _____ times a day.

His feeding schedule and the amounts fed –

7:00 a.m.

1:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

Feed three times daily until the pup reaches four to six months of age or until the pup no longer eats as much at the mid-day meal.

If your dog will be a homebody and “Champion of the Heart,” feed him every meal in the same place. If he is to be a traveling show dog, accustom him to eating in different places, such as his crate, your car, etc.

***When and How
To Increase
Food***

If your dog eats all you offer him for three days in a row, increase the total amount you feed him by ten percent. When your dog again eats all you offer for three days in a row, increase the amount by another ten percent. With some particularly eager eaters, you could be increasing amounts every three days until the pup slows growing.

How to Change Diet

While it is advisable to find one satisfactory diet and stick with it, you may wish to change diets. To avoid stomach upsets and diarrhea, follow this formula:

Day	Old Food	New Food
1-3		3/4
4-6	1/2	1/2
7-9	1/4	3/4
10		None

A Warning!

Never feed your dog immediately before or after exercise

Large, deep-chested breeds can be prone to a condition called "bloat," in which gases are trapped in the stomach and the stomach sometimes becomes twisted. While the causes are unknown, bloat is a true emergency and very often a fatal one.

Though rare in the Belgian Sheepdog, most experts recommend that any dog be rested at least one hour before and after eating.

The Dog Crate or Cage

Canines are “den” animals, which means they prefer to bed down in small, clean and protected quarters. We take advantage of this instinct by providing the dog a private, dark and protected “den” of his own in the form of a crate.

We confine a dog in a crate during the day when we cannot supervise its activity for short periods of time or at night for sleeping. During the day, place the pup in his crate whenever he falls asleep, cannot be watched and/or is to be fed.

Sometimes, as both pup and owner get used to crating, the owner gets lazy, and crate training becomes crate “living.” Dogs who are crated too much and too long tend to be hyperactive and, sometimes, self-mutilating.

The Fussy Puppy

Canines are not nocturnal animals, so they don’t usually object to being confined at night. Place the crate next to your bed so that when the pup whimpers, you can hang your hand over the side and let him know he is not alone.

If you’re certain the pup has had the opportunity to relieve himself but he persists in fussing about being locked up, be patient. He will adjust to this temporary lack of freedom.

The best way to handle fussing puppies is to ignore them, and they will soon fall sound asleep. Sometimes, if the pup is extremely vigorous in his escape attempts, throwing a pop can filled with pebbles and taped shut in the vicinity of the crate will distract him. A stream of water from a squirt gun or spray bottle can also be effective in quieting the pup.

Just remember, these methods are for the stubborn pup. Please be patient with a pup the first few days of his training.

Crate Do's and Don't's

Do—

- Praise your dog when he goes in his crate.
- Provide water, except at night.
- Give a “chewable,” such as a Nylabone® or dog toy, except at night. (No socks, please.)
- Cover the crate with a towel to make it dark and more den-like.

Don't—

- Ever, ever leave a collar on a crated animal.
- Use the crate for punishment.
- Crate the dog for too long at a time.

Chewing

Obviously, the crate can eliminate problems with chewing furniture and household items. The best solution to chewing problems is preventing the habit from developing in the first place. Sounds simple, but it means eliminating those things the puppy can chew from his environment and giving him chewables. Most important, you must teach him which are approved chewables and which are not. Lastly, supervise, supervise.

If the pup has hold of your favorite scarf, shoe, etc., don't chase him for it. Chasing after a pup, only to rip an object from his mouth teaches him to run and hide with a new and enticing object.

Instead, when you see a pup with something he isn't supposed to have, call him in a cheerful voice, arms wide open. Praise him well for bringing the object to you. Gently remove the object from his mouth. Put it away, and give him his chewable object. Praise him for chewing on it. Soon, you will find your pup proudly bringing you all objects he has found instead of hiding and chewing them up.

The Working Household

Today's pup is often raised by working owners, and special adjustments have to be made by owners to be sure the pup's needs are taken care of. While the canine is a pack animal (meaning he prefers living within a family group), with some forethought and planning, you can help him adjust to being alone during the day.

Housebreaking and training will take just a little bit longer in working households. It is unrealistic to think a pup can hold his urge to eliminate all day long. You must also realize that the very young pup will be stressed and lonely in the beginning, but there are ways you can minimize his distress.

If you've planned to take the first few days off from work with your new puppy, you can begin helping him get used to being alone by leaving him on his own a few hours at a time.

Follow the suggestions below, and your pup should adjust very quickly to your schedule.

Leave a light on.

- Leave a radio or TV on.
- Have a neighbor, friend, relative or youngster check in on the pup and let him out at mid-day. Many kennels offer day care for pups at reasonable rates. This service provides your pet excellent opportunities for socializing with people and pets and keeps your pup occupied during the day.
- Leave a few safe chewable dog toys to play with.
- Make sure your toys are too big to be swallowed. Leave food and water.
- Make sure he eliminates before you leave.
- Give him enough room so he doesn't have to lie in his own mess, should he have to eliminate.
- Last, but perhaps most important – make your departures and homecomings as uneventful and unemotional as possible.

Make sure the area you are leaving the dog in during the day has been "dog-proofed." Remove any and all things that could be destroyed. Make sure the dog cannot open cabinets. Store poisons,

cleaners, etc., in upper cabinets. Try to choose an area small enough to be covered with newspaper.

Ideally, dogs in working households should be left in a safe, dog-proofed place, such as a utility room or garage, with a doggy door leading to a padlocked chain-link enclosure with a top and bottom. In such a situation, the dog is safe from the elements. He cannot do damage to himself or to his surroundings. He is able to eliminate, and he is protected from theft.

While we don't recommend crating a dog for as long as an eight-hour working day, if you can find no alternative, please purchase a crate in which the pup can stand up and stretch out fully, turn around, and still have some space left over. Then, make sure someone can let the pup out during the day until he's old enough to hold himself all day.

Some pups do well in a portable wire exercise pen which can be set up anywhere and lined with newspapers. Most portable exercise pens are lightweight and can be folded when not in use. Most have eight two- or three-foot-wide panels and come in a variety of heights. We recommend you use a pen 42 to 48 inches high.

The disadvantage of exercise pens is that some clever dogs learn to climb out of them, so they must sometimes be covered. Wire spacing is sometimes so wide on some pens that little jaws can get caught, so some supervision is necessary as you begin to train your pup to use an exercise pen.

House Time

Belgian Sheepdogs, although capable of living outside, need house time. They are extremely devoted to their human families and need to feel they are part of the family unit.

If you wish your dog to live outside, we strongly urge you to bring him inside for the evening when everyone is at home for socialization. But remember, a puppy is not born housebroken or with house manners. These have to be taught.

House- Training

If your crated pup cannot hold his urge to eliminate, he will let you know, as he does not like to soil his bed.

If you neglected to let him relieve himself, fed him too late or ignored his pleas and the worst happens, say nothing. Remove the pup and take him outside. Praise him if he relieves himself and return him to a cleaned-up crate. This accident was not his fault, and you'll be more attentive in the future.

The more a pup is forced to lie in his own wastes, the more insensitive he becomes to the situation. Usually, a dog who has been allowed to stay in a dirty crate will be difficult to housebreak and will remain a crate-soiler.

House Training Hints

- Feed on a regular schedule.
- Feed the amount of food that results in a well-formed stool.
- Keep diet constant. Avoid changing brands.
- Establish only one toilet area, preferably in a straight line from the house.
- Take the dog to the toilet area and stand still.
- This is not play time.
- Keep calm about accidents. Interrupt him by making a sharp noise. Do not hit the dog!
- Don't let the dog see you clean up accidents in the house.
- If the dog can smell the odor, he'll return to the same spot. Clean the area with a good odor neutralizer.
- Take the dog to the toilet area after eating and/or drinking, waking and/or excitement such as play, and chewing and/or sniffing.
- Praise the dog every time for going in the right place.
- The pup should not have the run of the house until reliable without supervision.

Outside Needs

Although some Belgians remain contained in a standard four-foot-high fence, a five- to six-foot-high fence is more of a deterrent to jumping.

Fence jumping is usually a symptom of another problem. Dogs jump fences out of boredom, lack of socialization and attention, and for breeding purposes. The single dog is more apt to jump fences than is the dog who has companionship.

Provide your dog with lots of exercise and socialization with the family, and he will usually be content to stay home. Neutering usually stops the wandering for breeding purposes.

It is sometimes necessary, and often preferable for your dog's safety, to have an outside pen which may be locked when you are away. Gates are accidentally left open, and dog thefts occur every day.

For short-term use, a pen measuring six feet wide, 15 feet long and six feet high, with a top and a dog house inside will do nicely. If your dog is expected to spend long periods of time in his pen, then a 30-foot long enclosure is preferable.

At least part or all of the penned area should be shaded in the summer months. Your dog needs fresh water daily, along with a dog house that is dry and warm in winter and cool in summer. The house should be big enough for the adult sized dog to stand up and turn around in.

Exercise

A Belgian is an active dog and needs exercise.

Usually, if there is another dog in the family and a fenced yard, they will exercise themselves in play. If your dog is an only dog, you will have to provide the exercise.

An excellent way to provide exercise is walking and, especially, having your dog fetch balls, Frisbees®, etc. Just be sure not to over-tire a young puppy.

Never allow your Belgian to run loose unsupervised. Remember, Belgians are a herding dog and might consider anything that moves – including cars – fair game to chase.

Rolin Ridge expects that you will have routine veterinary care provided for your new dog.

Health Care

Routine health care should at least include remaining vaccinations against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis and parainfluenza (DHLP) and Parvo, depending on at what age you acquired your pup, and DHLP boosters at yearly intervals thereafter.

Parvo vaccinations should be given as recommended by your vet. For dogs participating in dog shows, obedience or conformation classes, or those who are frequently boarded, we recommend Parvo boosters every six months

If Corona virus is a problem in your area, your vet will recommend vaccinations against it also.

Rabies shots are given at one- to three-year intervals, depending on the type of vaccine used.

Heartworm tests and tool checks should be done yearly, and the dog de-wormed as necessary.

After having your vet check for heart worms, give heart worm preventive daily or monthly, as directed.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworms are killers. Once thought to be a problem only in the South, the disease is now found in all states and Canada.

Heartworms can be detected by a simple blood test. Most vets recommend a heartworm check once a year.

Since mosquitoes transmit the heartworm larvae to the dog, your dog must be on heartworm preventive during the mosquito season. In some areas, owners use preventive year-round. Whether you choose to give a daily or a once-month preventive, follow your vet's advice to keep your dog free of this disease.

Teething

As soon as permanent teeth begin to erupt, watch for retained puppy teeth, as they may deflect the permanent teeth to form an unsatisfactory bite.

Stubborn puppy teeth can often be worked loose by wiggling them back and forth over a period of several days. In extreme cases, they may have to be extracted by your vet.

Do not wait too long, as permanent damage to your puppy's bite could occur from retained puppy teeth.

Anesthetics

The Belgian Sheepdog population is very small, yet we hear of one or two Belgians' dying under anesthesia each year. Because Belgians do not usually carry much body fat, it is thought they have difficulty ridding their systems of drugs.

Never take any surgery for granted. There is always a risk when anesthetizing an animal, so elective surgery should be avoided if at all possible. Sedatives and barbiturates should be administered "to effect" and never based on the dog's weight alone.

Meet with your vet and discuss your dog's special problems in advance of any surgery. Since many of today's vets are very busy and in large, multi veterinarian prac-

*Getting
The Most From
Your Vet*

tices, it is worth an extra appointment to reacquaint the vet who will perform the surgery with your dog and to remind him or her of your concerns.

By all means, choose a vet who has a good reputation with dog show people. They tend to be a fussy lot! Also, look for a vet who has experience with your breed. You'd be surprised at how many vets have never treated a Belgian.

It takes time to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect for your veterinarian. Take the time to find a good one!

Recognize that veterinarians are not God. They don't know the answer to everything, and your telling them that Fido "just doesn't look good" won't help them give a proper diagnosis. Be prepared to give your vet an accurate, detailed description of your dog's problems.

You must also do your part by providing your vet with a patient that will allow an examination. Many dogs don't particularly care to be examined by a vet, especially if the dog makes unpleasant associations with the vet or the animal hospital. Never add to the problem by being nervous, coddling a fearful dog or "babying" your Belgian. Train your dog to allow handling. That is your responsibility.

If you are unsure about your vet's diagnosis or treatment, get a second opinion.

Finally, follow your vet's instructions for treatment.

Grooming

You can prevent many health problems, or at least discover them before they become serious, by developing good grooming habits for your Belgian. We recommend a once-weekly grooming session.

Basic equipment you will need:

- A good quality pin brush for every-day grooming.
- A wire slicker brush and a wide-toothed comb for pulling out dead hair when your Belgian is shedding.
- Nail clippers.
- Styptic powder to stop a nail from bleeding if cut too short.
- Cotton swabs and mineral oil or peroxide for cleaning ears.

Weekly Grooming

Brush your Belgian's coat *from the skin out*. Don't just fluff the top layer. While brushing, make it a habit to check for skin problems, fleas, ticks, etc.

Clean ears. Some pups produce large amounts of ear wax. The amount usually lessens as they mature.

Check eyes, foot pads and mouth. Healthy gums can be pink, gray or black.

Clip your dog's nails regularly. Letting nails grow too long can cause the foot to spread and be uncomfortable for the dog to walk on. Ask your vet to show you how to cut your pup's nails.

Some dogs, no matter what, will struggle when nail-cutting time arrives. With these, restraint will work. Sometimes bribery with food will help, too. Cut a nail, offer a treat. Then cut another nail and give a treat until all nails are cut.

Even the most willing dog will object to nail clipping if the cutting blade of your clippers is dull and crushes the nail before it cuts. If your dog objects to nail trimming, try a new, sharp blade in your clippers.

Dental Care

As in humans, good preventive dental care — beginning at an early age — is a must for your Belgian. Dogs do develop tooth problems, and periodontal disease can be a problem in the older dog. Ask your vet to show you how to care for your pup's teeth.

Bathing

Since bathing encourages shedding, bathe your Belgian only when he is obviously dirty and when a good brushing or rubdown with a damp rag won't do the job.

If you do bathe your Belgian, make sure he is dry to the skin before letting him outside. If you must bathe your dog during the winter, let him sleep inside that night.

Finally, since bathing tends to soften a Belgian's medium-harsh textured coat, avoid bathing your dog for several days before showing him at a dog show.

Shedding

Shedding makes way for a healthy new coat and is perfectly normal. When your dog begins shedding, you must get out all that dead hair, or it will mat. By brushing and combing three or four times a week, you can remove all dead hair and leave your dog's skin healthy and ready for new hair to come in faster.

A Belgian's puppy coat tends to bleach out and sometimes turns rust colored. This will also happen when the dog is about to start shedding. Frequently, there will be gray hairs mixed in the long hair behind the thighs.

The Belgian Coat

Aside from a white spot on the chest, there can be the occasional white hair on the muzzle or legs. It is common to have white hairs under the pads of the feet. For show purposes, the stray white hairs on the face or body may be plucked if found objectionable. When showing rust-colored puppy coats, some thinning or hand-plucking may be necessary.

Sunlight, chemicals and saliva can turn a black coat rusty colored. Many grooming preparations, sprays and shampoos have sun-screening properties which are useful if your dog is subjected to much strong sunlight. External parasites will keep the dog chewing, and his saliva will bleach the coat. Avoid the use of harsh chemicals.

Collars of any kind tend to wear off hair if left on continuously. The show prospect should not wear a collar except when being trained, being walked, etc. Nylon collars tend to break less hair than chain collars.

All the grooming in the world cannot overcome the damage done to a poorly-kept dog whose coat and skin have been neglected. Internal and external parasites, such as worms, fleas and ticks, can do much damage to skin and coat.

Keep your dog clean and parasite-free, and he will have a beautiful coat.

Final Words on Grooming

Training

Obedience

We strongly suggest obedience training for your Belgian. Most obedience schools offer puppy training classes for puppies from two to four months old and more formal training later on.

A really good instructor can mean the difference between success and failure, so choose an obedience school carefully. Investigate the schools you're considering thoroughly and ask for instructors' credentials.

Conformation

Most cities offer conformation handling classes. These provide a good opportunity for you to learn how to show your dog.

Basically, the show prospect should be trained to trot on a loose leash without pulling and to stand still while every part of his body, including testicles on a male, is examined by a stranger. The pup should also allow his mouth to be opened and his teeth examined without resistance.

The show puppy needs to be socialized regularly. It is important that he learn how to behave around other dogs and strangers. He should be encouraged to approach and be petted by strangers and gradually introduced to larger and larger groups of people as the time nears for his show debut.

There are many good books and videos published that can help you in training and understanding your dog. A list of recommended viewing and reading is at the end of this booklet.

Temperament

Remember that the Belgian originally was used to herd and guard flocks and later was trained in guard and protection work. He can be a very versatile dog. He is seen tending livestock, doing police work, saving lives in search and rescue work, guiding the blind, excelling in obedience competition, agility trials and tracking – not to mention his qualities as a companion and protector.

As a working dog, the Belgian would not have done so well if he were overly friendly with strangers or if he left his work to cavort with another dog. As a sheepdog, he was expected to drive off wolves and feral dogs to protect his flock. Some Belgians can be aggressive to strange dogs, but they can learn to tolerate other dogs if trained while young.

Since the breed is naturally suspicious of strangers, you can't expect to keep your pup at home and then take him out at six months of age and believe he will like meeting strangers or children or strange dogs. If you wish to show your dog or you just want a well-adjusted pet, your Belgian pup must receive a wide variety of experiences as he is growing up.

Some pups tend to be very "mouthy." They may love to "pretend" herding by chasing your pants leg as you walk by. They often love to chomp on your hands and arms and nip you in the rear to get you "moving" like a good sheepdog should! None of these actions is aggressive, but rather instinctive play which must be redirected. Mouthing is encouraged by tug-of-war and rough-housing, both of which are very bad-habit-forming games.

Many Belgians "smile" when playful, happy and content, exposing canines and sometimes all upper jaw teeth. Some owners delight in teaching their dogs to smile on command.

Your Belgian's protective capabilities will not reach their peak until two to three years of age. Therefore, encouraging aggressive behavior in your dog while he's young can have serious consequences by the time he matures.

Spaying and Neutering

Unless you're planning to use your dog for breeding, you should strongly consider neutering your male or spaying your female.

Neutering a male dog offers many health and behavior benefits. A male dog who has been neutered will be less distracted by females, less inclined to fight other dogs and less likely to want to roam. Neutering also reduces the chance of hormone-related problems, as well as prostate problems experienced by 60% of intact males. The cost of neutering a male is less than the cost of spaying a female.

Contrary to popular belief, a female's physical and emotional development does not suffer if she does not experience her first heat cycle or whelp a litter of puppies before being spayed. More than half of all unspayed female dogs develop breast cancer and/or uterine problems. Spaying before the first heat eliminates those problems.

In the long run, neutered and spayed dogs are healthier, happier and tend to live longer than intact dogs. That's why we highly recommend spaying or neutering any dog that will not be bred.

Aggression

Any dog who is capable of protection has the potential for aggression. Given the right set of circumstances, any dog of any breed can bite. With common sense and proper training, confrontation can be avoided as long as you:

- Never disturb a sleeping dog, even with a caress, without first waking him by speaking to him.
Never attempt to give painful treatment without
- first muzzling.
Never take a bone or food away from a dog or
- even pat a dog while he's eating unless you have very good reasons for doing so.
Never offer a dog a tidbit and then snatch it
- away.
Never keep a dog chained where he can be
- teased by other dogs or children. If he has to bite in order to defend himself, he may remain over-aggressive thereafter.
Never handle a dog roughly, especially around
- the genitalia. Never let your dog become overexcited at play.
Never let your dog become overexcited at play.
-

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Two to Three
Months**

Physically – The Belgian pup resembles a fuzzy bear cub. He is growing bigger every day. His coordination has improved, but he still cannot control his natural functions. He has learned how to bark and may have to be discouraged from overdoing it.

Psychologically – Now is a good time to teach him good habits and good manners by lovingly asserting your authority. Remember he is still a trusting, vulnerable little creature, and rough handling at this stage can mark him for life.

Puppies, like children, go through fear periods. The first fear period in dogs can occur between eight to 12 weeks. If you use common sense, the pup can come through these periods unscathed.

Don't sympathize and coddle a pup in a fear period, as he will learn that acting fearful brings attention. Be supportive and train him to accept new experiences in a positive way.

What he needs most – At this age, your Belgian needs attention, companionship, short daily walks on a leash, protection from cold, hunger and rough handling, and a good deal of patience.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Three to Four
Months**

Physically – He will begin losing his puppy fur, and you'll notice the shiny new hair beginning to come in. He can control himself most of the time, and his housebreaking is rapid now. He is growing fast, and his size enables him to jump up on chairs and sofas, so you must establish a policy regarding dogs on furniture and stick to it.

He needs sunshine and exercise, but still needs lots of sleep, too. His principal physical preoccupation is with teething. He will certainly want to chew everything in sight, so you should provide him chewables. Sometimes his ears will weaken and begin to flop, but this is only temporary.

Psychologically – His intelligence is wide awake. Satisfy his curiosity by offering him varied experiences, introducing him to new places, sights and sounds. He will quickly form habit patterns, good and bad.

He can be taught to come when called, walk on a leash reasonably well and to stay for short periods of time. He learns rapidly to retrieve, sit and lie down on command, but his attention span is still quite short.

In his quest for knowledge, he may be destructive, so he still requires supervision. He wants to follow you everywhere and seems to worship you blindly.

What he needs most – He needs a healthy diet, plenty of exercise, sunshine and rest, a regular daily schedule, increased vocabulary, more freedom and space for play, a more active social life, and as many new experiences as possible under your supervision.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Four to Six
Months**

Physically – His new coat will start coming in in a wide strip down his back, and by the end of this period, new coat may be evident over most of his body, though it will not have the length and thickness of the adult coat.

Your pup may look leggy, lean and “all ears.” His body may appear to grow in spurts, sometimes being longer than tall and growing faster in the rear than the front. At times, he may seem very out-of-proportion.

His stomach can handle bigger, less-frequent meals. His permanent teeth have usually grown in completely and they continue to grow until around eight months. This is the most destructive age, when his favorite occupation seems to be to chew, gnaw and tear things apart. Let him vent his natural instincts on appropriate toys and try to use up his energy with plenty of exercise and play.

Sometime during five to seven months of age, a second fear period occurs. Usually, this is just the age at which the owner wishes to start showing his pup. If your pup is suddenly afraid of things he previously took for granted, he is entering a fear stage. This is temporary, and you needn't shelter him from the world. Just be sure that any new experiences he has are positive. Be patient and help him develop self-confidence during this stage.

Psychologically – This is a crucial period. In wildlife, packs are formed at the beginning of winter, when spring-born pups are five or six months old, and this is the age when domesticated dogs need replacement activity and, above all, leadership! They start to develop territorial instincts which can lead to aggressive behavior if not controlled.

A pup who is always allowed to have his own way now may be spoiled forever. His budding sense of social dominance and subordination makes it vital for you to establish your authority without destroying his self-confidence. Restrict lessons to those requiring energy and willingness, which he possesses in abundance, rather than self-control which is practically nil now.

What he needs most— He needs lots of outdoor play, a generous, drier diet, chewing toys, loving kindness and a slightly higher standard of discipline.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Six to Nine
Months**

Physically – He is entering adolescence. It may be a period of awkwardness and rebellion or of graceful growth and learning. Most adolescent dogs go through an embarrassing stage of making indecent advances to children, pillows, chairs and human arms and legs. This is quite common, especially with animals who have been raised without the company of the opposite sex and who must discover for themselves their proper sex object. He may indulge in nipping as an outlet for his burgeoning sex drive.

Females at this age will come into heat for the first time and every six months thereafter. They must be spayed or safely confined, on average for 21 days, to avoid mating. A Belgian female is not considered mature until at least 18 months old.

Psychologically – Your Belgian has gained so much self-confidence that he has begun to get ideas of his own, and sometimes thinks his ideas are better than yours. You need to be quite firm at times to maintain your authority.

He has already become attached to his old habits, but is still very quick to form new ones. He tries to understand everything you say and even attempts to communicate with you, telling you he would like to go out, or that he is hungry or bored. His sense of property and territory is well-developed, and he has learned to respect others' territory, too.

His intuition is developing. He recognizes friends before they have rung the doorbell and is at the door to greet you whenever you come home. Male pups fee; the urge to roam and may find confinement and restraint irksome.

What he needs most – He needs kind, firm handling, nourishing food, lots of exercise and activity to keep him out of mischief, and frequent displays of affection to make up for all the scolding you have to do.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Nine to Twelve
Months**

Physically – He may stop growing taller, and his lanky body will start to fill out. At the beginning of this period, his coat will have reached full bloom and, depending on the time of year he was born or how much time he spends inside in dry heat, he may have his first coat shed.

His sexual characteristics become more pronounced, with males looking more masculine and females more feminine.

Psychologically – The sexual differences are more apparent, too. Males tend to bark more and play rougher and more aggressive games. They become more competitive and enjoy racing with other dogs or bullying them. Females generally make it clear whether they are going to be quiet, affectionate home-lovers or tomboy sporting companions.

Instincts such as hunting, running, digging and tracking begin to seek expression. He is curious, explorative, eager to learn and proud of each new accomplishment. But at the same time, he clings strongly to old habits, and rehabilitation requires much time and effort.

What he needs most – He needs mental and physical activity, greater responsibility and independence in areas where he can be trusted, new experiences beyond his home territory, firm but kind discipline, lavish praise for his achievements and good behavior, lots of companionship and more specific, serious training for his adult life.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
One to Three
Years**

Physically – Your dog will continue to develop heavier bone, a deeper chest and a fuller coat, as well as greater strength and endurance. He no longer needs a body-building diet, but a maintenance diet that is adjusted to his daily energy requirements.

Psychologically – He is unconditionally devoted to you and may become jealous and possessive. His intelligence and receptivity are at their peak, and he vastly enjoys collaborating with you in work and play, as well as acquiring new skills. He invents little rituals and enjoys a regular daily routine. He is quite conscious of his social status and is prepared to defend his position as well as his possessions.

What he needs most – He needs to be trained for work, sport or merely for fun, and to exercise his intelligence. He also needs lots of mental and physical activity, mutual loyalty and devotion.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Three to Eight
Years**

Physically – He is in his prime.

Psychologically – He is a fully-formed adult and is unlikely to change in personality or mentality, although he is capable of learning new things until the end of his life. He knows and understands you and your habits as well as you know and understand him – perhaps better. These should be the most harmonious, rewarding years of your life together.

What he needs most – He needs a well-balanced life and a loving owner.

*Emotional
and
Physical
Development*

**From
Eight Years
On**

Physically – If he hasn't already, he may get white hair around his muzzle, above his eyes and inside his ears. He is beginning to decline in activity, needing less food, less exercise and more sleep. His teeth should be watched, and as they start to go, he needs a softer diet. His hearing-in particular, his directional hearing-diminishes. His eyesight dims. His digestion is not what it used to be. Vitamin and mineral supplements can relieve and retard his infirmities, which may include rheumatism and arthritis.

He is more vulnerable to chills as well as to contagious diseases. He may grow warts and tumors that need to be removed. His nails require more frequent clipping now that he exercises less. His hind legs weaken, and his stamina diminishes.

Do not humiliate him by asking him for greater physical effort than he can furnish, because he is aware of and embarrassed by his waning physical powers.

Psychologically – He needs much understanding and love, even if he is nervous, jealous and cranky. He is comforted by a regular daily routine, but most of all by a feeling of emotional security.

What he needs most-- He needs respect, affection, understanding, patience, a diet suited to his physical condition, regular medical check-ups, a great deal of indulgence and an infinite amount of gratitude for the service he has rendered and the joy he has given you throughout the previous years.

Reading List

Belgian Sheepdogs

*Note: Except as indicated,
all titles are available from
Direct Book Service
Post Office Box 2778
701-B Poplar
Wenatchee, WA 98807-2778
Telephone: (509) 663-9115
Order telephone: (800) 776-2665
Facsimile: (509) 662-7233
Email: dgctbook@cascade.net
<http://www.dogandcatbooks.com>*

Belgians from Start to Finished
Available from publisher at:
8 Danube Drive
Maumelle, AR 72113

The Belgian Sheepdog
Dykema

Belgian Sheepdog Handbook
Volumes I, II, III
Available from:
Marcy Spalding
253 Bryn Mawr Circle
Houston, TX 77024

The Belgian Sheepdog
Turnquist

The Belgian Sheepdog video
American Kennel Club

Children & Dogs

Child-Proofing Your Dog
Kilcommons and Wilson

Your New Baby & Bowser
Rafe

Conformation Showing

Show Me! A Dog Showing Primer
Coile

K-9 Structure and Terminology
Gilbert and Brown

Herding

Herding Dogs, Progressive Training
Holland

**General
Training**

Good Owners, Great Dogs
Kilcommons and Wilson

The Art of Raising a Puppy
The Monks of New Skete

Sirius Puppy Training video
Dunbar

Good Owners, Great Dogs video
Kilcommons and Wilson

**Obedience
Competition**

Proof Positive 5-video set
Turner, Nelson and Ruzzo

Steppin' Up to Success Book 2: Novice
Steppin' Up to Success Book 3: Open and Utility
(Book 1 due for revision in 1998)
Arnold

Schutzhund Obedience: Training in Drive
Dildei and Booth

Karen Pryor's Clicker Training Start Up Kit
Pryor

Clicker Magic video
Pryor

Behavior

Owner's Guide to Better Behavior in Dogs
Campbell

Health

Dog Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook
Carlson and Giffin