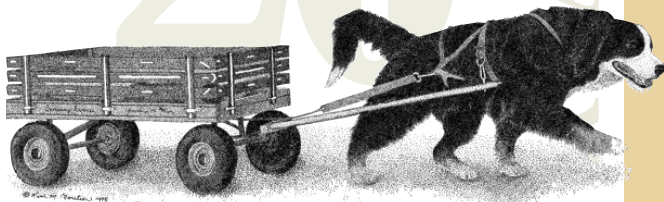


20  
YEARS



**On September 22, 1991,  
at the Middlesex County 4-H  
Fairgrounds in Westford,  
Massachusetts, the Bernese  
Mountain Dog Club of America  
Joined the Ranks of Other  
National Clubs in Sponsoring  
and Promoting Tests Which  
Spotlight the Original Purpose  
of Their Breed**

**Seven Bernese Mountain Dogs stepped  
into history when they earned the first-ever  
Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America  
Novice Draft Dog (NDD) titles:**

**Bluesky Matt Dillon V Summit CDX  
and Kathy Heun**

**Liskarn America Bound Jerry  
and Alison Jaskiewicz**

**Lupine's Little Tugboat CD  
and Chris Cottle**

**Ch Nordstaaten's Emma CDX  
and Ruth Ballmer**

**Olympians Helen of Troy CD  
and Lisa Allen**

**Ch Sandusky's Promises Promises CD  
and Beth Zipsie**

**Sudan Neuchatel V Halidom CD  
and Sue Sanvido**

*"The seven teams that passed did an  
excellent job. It was a tribute to our breed  
to see such reliable and happy  
performances. The youngest dog to pass  
was 2½ years old, and the  
oldest was 9½."  
—Judge Beverly Barney*

**T**he Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Nashoba Valley worked as a team to create an inaugural event the US Berner community would be proud of. There was outstanding support for the first-ever BMDCA Draft Test: twelve exhibitors represented five of the New England states, Quebec, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Colorado. The 90 x 90 foot ring was decorated with swiss flags, red and white chrysanthemums, and milk cans. The cart park along one side of the ring was defined by life-size plywood berners cutouts, perfectly marked, of course, at each end. An intriguing variety of carts was neatly lined up and ready for the test.

Judges were Beverly Barney from New Hampshire and Mary Alice Eschweiler from Wisconsin. Test Secretary was Elaine Golden. Eight stewards assured a ring that ran like clockwork, while 150 spectators were on hand to watch, enjoy, cheer and revel in the fact that Berners were back at work in America!

Both judges were members of the original 1979 Draft Test Committee, and their participation completed the circle of events which led to this first BMDCA Draft Test. With more than thirty years of carting between them, Bev and Mary Alice brought depth of knowledge as well as years of experience with Bernese into the ring. They took their responsibility seriously and established a high standard of judging and performance, while setting the exhibitors at ease.

The award ceremony crowned a perfect fall day. All twelve teams, harnessed and hitched, were invited into the ring to the applause of the spectators. Each exhibitor received a glass mug engraved *First BMDCA Draft Test*. Passing teams were called out one at a time and rosettes were attached to the dog's harnesses. A single circuit of the ring by all the teams brought this very special day to a close.

*The BMDCA Draft Test "gives our breed  
the opportunity to retain the heritage of the  
Berner Sennenhund of Switzerland. It is a  
realistic test of working conditions that is  
attainable by most Bernese Mountain Dogs  
with proper training and equipment."  
—Judge Beverly Barney*



September 22, 1991: Berners wait patiently during the group-stay, hitched to a wonderful variety of carts. The dogs could be left standing, sitting, or lying down at the handler's discretion. This exercise is still part of the current draft test. Any exhibitor will tell you this is the longest three minutes in the world. Photo: Tom Jaskiewicz.

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## Development of the BMDCA Draft Test Regulations

In June 1979 the BMDCA Board of Directors asked Beverly Barney to form a committee to explore and formulate standards for a draft test. The same year the Newfoundland Club of America (NCA) began a similar project, contacted the BMDCA, and proposed a cooperative effort. Development proceeded separately with the hope of future joint tests. This was not meant to be.

Twice, in 1982 and 1984, the BMDCA submitted the proposed regulations to the regional clubs for comments and suggestions; and approved draft work matches to evaluate and improve the regulations. No action was taken and the regulations remained in limbo for several years with few people aware of their existence. The NCA approved draft tests in 1984.

In the summer of 1988, the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Nashoba Valley (BMDCNV) decided the time had come for Berners to be able to earn titles reflecting their working heritage. Sunday, October 22, 1989 was chosen for hosting the first BMD Draft Match in Medfield, Massachusetts using the 1979 BMDCA Draft Test Regulations. The entry of three was a disappointment but the turnout of over seventy spectators from at least eight states buoyed spirits. Berner owners wanted to learn more about draft work! The performances of all three teams were greeted with enthusiasm although only one team passed the test. Evaluation forms were included with the catalogs and provided valuable feedback. Many people requested an on-leash class comparable to the AKC Novice Obedience class. (The 1979 regulations had only one class conducted entirely off-leash, not a realistic goal for Berner owners just learning about draft work.) Others thought the formality of the test exercises did not reflect everyday working conditions.

The BMDCNV submitted a match report to the BMDCA with recommended changes to the regulations and requested the re-establishment of the Draft Work Committee to pursue the development of a draft performance event. The board acted on this request in May 1990, appointing Nashoba's Paul Emerson to chair the committee.

The BMDCA Draft Committee revised the regulations based on the comments of the exhibitors, spectators, and judges, and scheduled a second Draft Match on Sunday, September 23, 1990 in Westford, Massachusetts. The new regulations offered two classes, one mostly on-leash and the other entirely off-leash. Some exercises were modified and a new one was added—all this with spectators, as well as exhibitors in mind.

Entries totalled seven for the second match, five in Novice Draft and two in Open Draft, from seven states! The exercises were streamlined for both spectator appeal and smoother ring performances; multiple commands, signals and praise were allowed in most exercises; and scoresheets were given to the exhibitors at the conclusion of judging. Three dogs passed the Novice class and both Open Draft dogs passed.

The second match was as much a learning experience as the first and the Draft Committee met again to make relatively minor changes and clarification of the regulations. A complete package of Draft Test Regulations was submitted to the BMDCA in December 1990. Approval came promptly in January 1991.

The exercises in both classes are designed to demonstrate willingness and control while the team executes a series of maneuvers while pulling a draft rig which may be a cart, wagon, sled, toboggan or travois. There are both individual and group exercises.

These draft regulations represent the work of many people over more than a decade. Thanks are due especially to the original 1979 Draft Committee and to the Draft Committee members of the BMDCNV for their commitment to the working heritage of our special breed.

*This article was originally prepared by Alison Jaskiewicz for the AKC Gazette Breed column, and has been edited and reprinted with permission.*

## Reflections On the Early Draft Test Equipment:

*"In the beginning most carts were home-made, adapted garden carts, sulky carts and Radio Flyer wagons. It was amazing how many dogs did pass pulling the noisy Radio Flyers with their little wheels and tendency to jack-knife and flip over. After a couple years—particularly in Novice—all the carts tended to look the same."*

*"Harnesses ranged from homemade carting harnesses to sled-dog, to modified goat harnesses."*

*The spring scale: "Using a spring scale was an attempt to factor in the drag weight of the cart. We then factored in the dog's weight to determine how much weight should be added in the cart. This was a good idea on paper that never worked out in the real world. We needed a level space and lots of weight on hand (usually bags of dog food). In some cases we were loading 60, 70, 80 lbs in carts. Later on we went to the 20 lbs for Novice and the weight of dog for Open. The spring scale was gleefully retired."*

—Paul Emerson

## Draft Tests hosted by the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Nashoba Valley

Year	Judges	Chair(s)
1991	Bev Barney/Mary Alice Eschweiler	Alison Jaskiewicz
1992	David Denis/Paul Emerson	Alison Jaskiewicz
1993	Alison Jaskiewicz/Sue Sanvido	Chris Cottle
1994	Elizabeth Bradley/Paul Emerson	Chris Cottle
1995	Chris Cottle/Chris Mann	Paul Emerson
1996	Alison Jaskiewicz/Eden Jonas	Beth Atkinson
1997	Chris Cottle/Paul Emerson	Ellen Nott & Martha Phelps
1998	<i>National Specialty</i> Paul Emerson/Mary Alice Eschweiler	Chris Cottle
1998	<i>National Specialty</i> David Denis/Mary Richards	Chris Cottle
1998	Bev Barney/Phil Atkinson	Nisha Coons
1999	Bev Barney/Phil Atkinson	Paul Emerson
2000	Barb Gibson/Sara Steele	Linda Bates
2001	Paul Emerson/Sherrie Start	Marjorie Cottle
2002	Alison Jaskiewicz/Phil Atkinson	Jon Cons
2003	Barbara Gibson/Val Horney	Elizabeth Malcolmson
2004	<i>Spring</i> Sara Steele/Paul Emerson	Marjorie Cottle
2004	<i>Fall</i> Sue Sanvido/Barb Gibson	Jon Cons
2005	Sherrie Start/Peggy Granger	Margot Burwood
2006	Paul Emerson/Eden Jonas	Jon Cons
2007	Chris Mann/Sara Steele	Margot Burwood
2008	<i>National Specialty</i> Val Horney/Linda Thomas	Sue Nowak
2008	<i>National Specialty</i> Jennifer Brightbill/Chris Cottle	Sue Nowak
2008	Phil Atkinson/Ruth Nielsen	Alison Jaskiewicz
2008	Paul Emerson/Ruth Nielsen	Alison Jaskiewicz
2009	Barbara Gibson/Steve Likevich	Margot Burwood
2009	Sara Steele/Steve Likevich	Margot Burwood
2010	Chris Cottle/Steve Dudley	Marjorie Cottle
2010	Paul Emerson/Steve Dudley	Marjorie Cottle
2011	Patti Davieau/Phil Atkinson	Elizabeth Malcolmson
2011	Patti Davieau/Barbara Gibson	Elizabeth Malcolmson