



VALKYRIE LEONBERGERS

Leonberger Club of America Member Breeder

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INFORMATION BROCHURE¹

About the Leonberger

Leonbergers are an old German breed, originally created to look like the crest of the town of Leonberg in Germany, which was a stylized lion. They are thought to be descended from the Newfoundland, the Saint Bernard, and the Pyrenean Mountain Dog. They have been used as flock guardians and companions in their country of origin and were introduced to the United States in the late 1970s. The Leonberger Club of America (LCA) was established in 1985 to protect and enhance the qualities of the breed in this country. The breed was officially recognized by the American Kennel Club in July of 2010, and the Leonberger Club of America is the official parent club for the breed in this country. You can visit the LCA online at www.leonbergerclubofamerica.com.

Though not for everyone, Leonbergers are a very special breed. They are extremely fond of their families, have a strong affinity for children, tolerate other household animals, and can be “gentle giants” if raised properly with adequate socialization and consistent training. They usually remain stable and calm amid noise and chaos, and will participate joyfully in almost any family venture, from boring shopping trips to stimulating hikes in the woods or swims at the beach.

It is vital that these very sociable dogs be an integral part of family life, as they suffer more than most breeds if kept from family activities. While Leonbergers are very social and affectionate dogs that love their families and do well with children, there are many aspects about the breed that potential owners must keep in mind before bringing home a Leo.

Leos are a breed with a heavy double coat which requires a thorough brushing at least once a week. They shed their undercoats profusely twice a year for a period of 3-4 weeks, during which time they need to be brushed daily, and the fur that they shed can fill several grocery bags. They also shed moderately throughout the rest of the year, and you will find a certain amount of fur at all times on your floor, clothes, furniture, and even in your food, as it tends to float around. Their fur, however, can easily be vacuumed up, and does not stick in clothing or upholstery like some of the shorter-haired breeds.

This breed matures slowly, both mentally and physically, and they are not considered mature until they are between three to four years old. They get their height quickly, but filling out that framework takes some time. Leo puppies get very large very fast, but still have puppy brains, so early and consistent obedience training is an absolute must! Untrained Leonbergers can easily drag their owners during walks, or if they see something interesting. By the time your pup is eight or nine months old, it can potentially be over 100 pounds, so it is essential to take the time to train it and establish a leadership role while your pup is still young.

Leonbergers must be well-socialized as puppies by consciously being exposed to other dogs, people, kids, and the world at large, on a regular (weekly) basis until they are at least 18-24 months of age. Leos that have not been adequately socialized when young can often be fearful and shy of other people or dogs, which is something that can be easily avoided with proper early socialization.

Leonbergers are not outside dogs. They are extremely social people-oriented dogs that do very poorly without regular daily human interaction. They prefer to be wherever you are, and will often follow you from room to room. They do not like to be left alone or apart from their human family, and they can bark loudly and incessantly, as well as become potentially destructive, in the process of trying to get to their humans.

¹ This informational brochure has been provided by Julia Brady – Kalahari Leonbergers who is a co-owner of Anja. Included is a description of Kalahari Leonbergers. Valkyrie Leonbergers is working closely with Julia’s Brady due to her lengthy experience and we are adapting her ethics and standards in breeding and raising Leonbergers.

If bored or left to their own devices without supervision, Leos have been known to dismantle sprinkler systems, chew siding off a house, chew through cable wires in the ground, dig big holes, snack on furniture, and chew through drywall, among other things!

In order to prevent this, Leonbergers, particularly puppies, must be kept active - both mentally and physically - through long daily walks, frequent opportunities to play with other similarly-sized puppies, attending weekly dog obedience training classes, having short daily training sessions with their owners to practice behaviors such as "Come", "Sit", "Down", and "Stay", and provided daily with appropriate toys and chewing items.

Leos are sensitive dogs and respond very well to positive reinforcement and motivation-based training. They are intelligent dogs who get bored easily and are not fond of repeating something over and over again, so training sessions need to be kept short and sweet. As teenagers, they go through a period where consistency and proper leadership is essential. If your role as the leader in the home is not clearly obvious in a humane way, a teenage Leo will step in to take that role. Basic obedience training and leash control is a must!

While Leos are capable of competitive obedience work, they are not selectively bred for those traits the way Golden Retrievers are, and the Leo who excels in obedience trials is the exception, rather than the rule. They do perform in agility, but they are not Border Collies or Shelties, and during the first two years, much care must be taken in how they are exercised because of how slowly their growth plates close. Once they have reached maturity, Leonbergers do very well in activities such as therapy work (visiting nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, or retirement homes), library reading programs for children, and draft work such as pulling carts in parades.

Most Leonbergers love being wet and muddy, and as puppies, they love to tip over their water bowls and lie in the puddles they make. While Leos do not drool like other breeds such as Newfies or Saint Bernards, they do "dribble" water after drinking. In wet weather, if not properly supervised and provided with appropriate activities, Leos easily can dig large holes in your backyard. All Leos have webbed feet, and many excel in water activities. We have several Leos who are titled in Water Rescue work through the Newfoundland Club of America.

Leos tend to do well with children, but care must be taken with young children as due to their large size and exuberance, Leo puppies can very easily knock over little kids unintentionally. While Leos tend to be far more patient with children than many other breeds, it is essential that adults ensure their kids do not mistreat or abuse the dog. Once mature, Leonbergers are generally good watchdogs and discriminating barkers, as long as they have been well-socialized as puppies, and are not bored or left alone too long.

Males can potentially go through a grumbly growly period during adolescence, during which consistent and firm leadership is critical. Since this is a giant breed, we do not recommend early neutering (prior to the age of 24 months) as they need their hormones in order to fully develop their breed-specific characteristics. As the hormones kick in, however, so does the social posturing. Females can go through this as well, but not quite as much as the boys. Learning about dog behavior during adolescence is very important in order to know what is normal and what is not.

It is also imperative to have an experienced and qualified trainer that you trust and work closely with during the first two years of your pup's life. We ask that each of our pups goes through a series of at least two consecutive **group** obedience classes to ensure basic control (Puppy Kindergarten and Basic Obedience), and then refer to the obedience instructor/trainer on an as-needed basis until the dog is fully mature.

Your yard must be physically fenced with a 6-foot or taller fence in order to keep your dog safe. Invisible fences are a poor choice if you plan on leaving your dog alone within it. Your Leo may be stolen from it, other dogs can come onto your property, and many Leos have a very high pain threshold, and for these reasons, we do not place our puppies in homes with invisible fencing. Leonbergers are generally not a good choice for small homes or tiny backyards, unless owners can firmly commit to providing a minimum of twice-daily long walks for their Leo.

Puppies need regular self-regulated off-leash exercise, such as play sessions with another puppy, swimming, or playing ball, on grassy surfaces where they can stop themselves if they get tired out. Jogging with Leonberger puppies, or any activities involving jumping/landing over 12 inches in height, should be avoided until after their growth plates have closed at maturity (24 months+), because this can cause irreparable damage to their joints when young.

Due to their size, veterinary expenses for Leos are more than for smaller breeds, so potential owners must keep this in mind. We strongly recommend the purchase of a pet insurance policy to cover any emergency dog-related expenses, with coverage going into effect as soon as you take ownership of a new Leo. Other obvious size-related considerations include how much more food a Leo will eat (which also equates to how much comes out the other end) compared to other breeds, as well as having a vehicle large enough to transport a Leonberger.

According to our last health survey, the average lifespan for Leonbergers is 6.5 years for males and 7.5 years for females. As in most other giant breeds, the major cause of death is cancer (most commonly, osteosarcoma or hemangiosarcoma). They don't live nearly long enough, but every moment spent with a Leo is very much worth it! Additional health issues that can crop up in Leonbergers include hip dysplasia, cataracts, heart disease, Addison's disease, Inherited Leonberger Polyneuropathy, and hypothyroidism. For more information, visit the Leonberger Health Foundation at www.leohealth.org.

According to Dr. George Padgett, a noted geneticist from Michigan State University, all dogs have 4-5 genetic flaws at the least. There is no perfect dog, but the Leonberger Club of America (LCA) does require their member breeders to adhere to certain Member Practices set forth by the club, and most reputable Leonberger breeders conduct health testing on both parents of a litter.

We strongly recommend obtaining your new Leonberger puppy from a member breeder of the Leonberger Club of America (LCA) for the following reasons:

1. LCA breeders have agreed to Club Member Practices regarding ethical treatment of dogs.
2. LCA breeders mentor and provide assistance to one another, and are available to their puppy owners for the lifetime of their new dogs.
3. LCA breeders have agreed to perform health testing on dogs that they use for breeding and make those test results public. Mandatory health testing includes hips, elbows, eyes, thyroid, LPN1, and LPN2 (neurological disorders specific to Leonbergers).

All LCA member breeders' dogs used for breeding are required to obtain a CHIC (Canine Health Information Center) number.

Your job, as a potential puppy buyer, is to understand that breeders cannot prevent everything. We try to make the best breeding decisions possible and choose the healthiest dogs, but you may still end up with a dog that is afflicted with one of the ailments prevalent in the breed. All we can do is try to minimize (but not entirely eliminate) the risk of health issues by testing our breeding dogs prior to producing puppies.

Leonbergers were formally admitted as of July 1, 2010 to the American Kennel Club (AKC), the oldest and most highly-respected registry of purebred dogs in the United States. We actively show our dogs under qualified breed judges in the AKC show ring in order to obtain impartial evaluations of the dogs we breed, and to prove our commitment to only breeding Leonbergers which meet the established breed standard. Both sires and dams of our litters are almost always champions within the breed.

We test all of our breeding dogs per Leonberger Club of America breeding requirements. Our health warranty provides for a free replacement puppy from one of our future litters, if your dog from us dies (or must be euthanized) due to a proven genetically-inherited condition between the ages of 2 months – 12 months.

Our health warranty also provides you with a replacement puppy at half-price from one of our future litters, if your dog from us dies (or must be euthanized) due to a proven genetically-inherited condition between the ages of 12 months – 60 months. We do require that a necropsy be conducted in all cases to verify cause of death. In addition to this, our orthopedic warranty provides up to \$500.00 back if any puppy we produce is diagnosed by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) as having hip dysplasia or elbow dysplasia.

All of our puppies are registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC). Only those puppies which we feel have sufficient potential to be actively shown in the AKC breed ring towards a conformation championship are sold with AKC Full Registration papers, with the expectation that their owners will obtain their AKC championships. All other puppies are sold with AKC Limited Registration papers. For additional information, visit www.akc.org.

I will have been observing the litter for 2 months prior to their departure, I will be picking the best puppy to suit your needs, once you tell me what you plan to do with it and what type of lifestyle you have.

Are you looking for a companion to go for walks in the woods with and play with the children? Do you want to do therapy work? Do you want a dog to compete in obedience, or water work? Do you want to show and breed? None of those options are more or less important than the others, but they all have different requirements in the type of puppy who will best fit with you.

We spend a tremendous amount of time carefully researching each potential breeding and making sure each sire complements the dam. During the first two weeks, we sleep right next to the puppies to make sure all goes well, with around the clock care, and they are raised as part of our home. We start introducing household sights and sounds to them very early, spend lots of one on one time with each puppy to develop their mental and physical abilities, and expose them to sounds they may hear as adults, in order to get them off to the very best start possible. They have various kinds of play equipment to help them with coordination, and when they are able to run around and go outdoors, they are introduced to various footings like grass, concrete and gravel. They are handled daily and exposed to a variety of visitors, including children, to make sure their socialization process starts right away.

All of our puppies are sold on a written contract, which will ask you to continue what we have started. Prior to going home, our puppies are wormed a minimum of three times, are permanently identified using a microchip from a national registry, registered with the American Kennel Club, receive their first set of vaccinations and a thorough vet check, and go home with a toy from the litter, collar, leash, and useful information and articles on successfully raising a puppy, plus a lifetime of support from us.

As a breeder, I can do my very best to maximize the potential of each pup till they are 8 weeks old, but the end result of what they will be as adults is directly correlated to the amount of time, training, and socialization that the new owner (and family) provides for the dog. The socialization period during a dog's first 18 months are critical and can never be replaced once they are older.

We ask that you keep us informed (by phone, email, or regular mail) about how your dog is doing at a minimum of every six months during the first two years, and then yearly thereafter. I wonder frequently about how each of my pups is doing, and a periodical update with photos really helps me to get a feel for how they are growing.

Each of our puppies is very important to us, and we are always available to our puppy buyers for any questions or concerns that they may have. Should you ever have to rehome your Leo, we expect you to contact us first, and we will be glad to help you find a suitable arrangement.

About You

In future owners of one of our puppies, we look for the following:

- **Owners who appreciate the breed:** This includes an awareness of what the Leonberger Club of America (LCA) has tried to do over the past 25 years, which is to maintain physically and mentally healthy dogs. Buy a Leonberger because you understand the history of the breed and want to be part of it, and not because you want a trophy dog. We recommend becoming a member of the LCA at least for the first year, as joining the club is a good source of information on the breed and a great way to meet other owners with Leos. Breed information can be found at www.leonbergerclubofamerica.com.
- **Owners with some amount of previous dog experience:** The Leonberger is not always a good choice for a first-time dog owner due to its size and strength. However, a committed first-time owner who is open to advice, willing to read, and spend the time training and socializing their Leo, can do very well with one.
- **Owners with a good track record of previous dog ownership (if applicable):** How have you handled behavior and health problems that came up with other dogs you have owned? Have you ever returned a dog to a breeder (or taken one to the shelter), and what were the circumstances leading you to that end? Are you able to financially handle an emergency situation?
- **Owners who understand what a new puppy entails:** Have you successfully raised a puppy before? If you work during the day, have you thought about where the puppy will be, and how you will provide for its potty requirements while you are gone? Have you thought about where you will take the puppy to be socialized? Have you thought about where you will take the puppy for obedience classes?
- **Owners who are willing to stay in touch:** We like to know how our puppies are doing, and we have an email list through which owners of our puppies stay in touch with one another.

If you are interested in potentially breeding a Leonberger puppy that you obtain from us, please know that in order to protect the reputation of our breeding program and provide newcomers to the breed with sufficient knowledge to make informed mating decisions, no puppy from us may be bred without our prior written approval. This requirement may be waived depending upon the length of an individual's previous showing/breeding experience with Leonbergers or other comparable breed within the American Kennel Club.

Occasionally, we may have young adults or older adults available to the right home. Please let us know if an older dog is what you are looking for.

How do you get on our Waiting List?

1. Request our Puppy Questionnaire Form and return it to us completed in full via email. This is the first step in allowing us to get to know you better. Our questions are designed to help us know what you are looking for. Once we receive your questionnaire, we will call or email you to go over the information you provide, and to share further Leo-related information.
2. After we have spoken with you in person or over the phone, scheduled a home visit (if needed) through our network of Leo friends and owners nationwide, and generally feel comfortable that you will make a good home for one of our puppies, we will send you a Puppy Reservation Agreement.

We accept reservations and deposits for upcoming litters throughout the year, and generally do not have more than 1-2 litters each year. The reservation agreement must be signed and returned to us within five (5) business days after receipt, along with your **deposit of \$500.00**. This deposit will be refunded in full if we do not have the right gender or the right puppy for your family. We suggest that you make a copy of the forms for your own records.

Gestation is approximately 63 days, and our puppies are ready to go to their new homes when they are 8 weeks old. You must come to pick up your puppy in person, as we do not ship puppies. If you are not driving to pick up your pup, you can take it home in a “Sherpa bag” which can be carried on board in the cabin of a number of airlines. Sherpa bags may be purchased from Petsmart or Petco.

Please check out our website at www.valkyrieleonbergers.com for more information about us and our dogs.

Our puppies are \$4,000 (US Funds). The initial deposit of \$500.00, which is to be returned with your Reservation Agreement, will reserve you a puppy in our next litter.

The balance is due when you come to pick up your puppy at 8 weeks. You may send a personal check for the initial deposit, made out to “Renee Wilkinson”, but final payment must be made in cash, cashiers’ check, or money order, before you take your puppy home.

We occasionally place show-quality puppies at no cost on co-ownerships with local families near to us who are interested in showing – let us know if this is something you are interested in.

Thank you for your interest in our dogs!

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