

St. Bernard



The national dog of Switzerland, the St Bernard is named after the monk who, in the 10th Century, founded a hospice to care for travellers on the perilous routes through the Swiss Alps. The first dogs were Alpine Mastiffs, initially used to guard property, but with the discovery of their rescue abilities their role was changed. These dogs were the ancestors of the modern St Bernard.

By the 18th Century the role of the dogs had changed and they were being used for rescue work, locating lost and stranded travellers. The monks were using new blood to develop bigger dogs and it is thought that the Newfoundland and the Bloodhound might have contributed to the new type. Certainly the dogs became larger and longer coated. The outcrossing was disputed by some of the monks as they felt that a longer coat would ice up, so some of stock was purposely kept which remained close to the original short-coated type. Hence the breed still has long coated and smooth coated specimens today. The breed retained the name of Alpine Mastiffs well into the 19th Century, and it was not until 1888 that the modern title of St Bernard was adopted.

The traditional view of the rescuing St Bernard with a cask of brandy attached to his collar is a romantic and fanciful one, created by the famous Victorian artist Edwin Landseer, who painted the first two St Bernard's to arrive in London.

What health screening is currently relevant?

Kennel Club Accredited Breeders must use, or are strongly recommended to use, the following screening schemes and/or advice for sires and dams:

- **BVA/KC Hip Dysplasia Scheme**
- **Bitches not to produce a litter under two years of age**



ACCREDITED BREEDER SCHEME