

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOGS IN NORWAY

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ABSTRACT OF POSTER

Studies on mean canine life-span in complete national populations have to our knowledge not been conducted previously. In Norway more than 90% of all purebred puppies are registered in the Norwegian Kennel Club (NKC). A study was therefore conducted to evaluate general and cause-specific mortalities in a national canine population, and to estimate mean life-span. Owners of Bernese mountain dogs registered in the NKC between 1978 and 1992 were sent questionnaires. Owners were asked to give their name and address, dog's name, birthdate, gender, registration number, and if dead, date of death.

Questionnaires were returned for 2760 (79%) of 3460 registered dogs, of which 1760 (65%) were alive and 936 (35%) had died. The deceased comprised 53% males and 47% females. The overall mean life-span was 5 years, 7 months and 22 days; for females it was 6 years, 2 months and 7 days, and for males 5 years, 2 months and 3 days. Gender differences were statistically significant ($P < 0.001$) using a two tailed, t test. Age distribution frequencies showed that males contributed 62% of the population deaths below 5 years of age and 44% of the population deaths above 5 years. Causes of death were offered voluntarily by 51% of the respondents. Cancer, aggressiveness and skeletal disease contributed 30%, 18% and 17% of these causes of death, respectively.

In summary this study showed that mean life-span in Bernese mountain dogs was 5.7 years, that females had a one year longer mean life-span than males, and that cancer was the most common apparent cause of death.

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