



Greater Swiss Mountain Dog

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is the difference between a Greater Swiss and Bernese Mountain Dog?** While related these are two distinct breeds. The GSMD is the largest of four Swiss Mountain Dog breeds. The average height is only slightly taller than the BMD but the average weight is 15 or more pounds heavier. In terms of appearance the obvious difference is the length of coat, but the head shape is slightly different with the BMD having more “stop” or rise of forehead. Both breeds excel in drafting and are very biddable, but GSMDs have a bit more drive and perform well in herding, pack dog and weight pull events which require strength and/or stamina.
- 2. How big do they get?** A Swissy is a large, powerful breed capable of pulling carts loaded with over 3000 pounds. The females stand an average of 26 inches at the shoulders and weigh about 90 to 110 pounds. The males range from 25 ½ to 28 ½ inches tall and weigh from 105 to 140 pounds.
- 3. Do they eat a lot?** Swissys often have sensitive digestive systems and need a high quality dog food. An adult consumes about 5 cups per day divided into two or more feedings. Care must be taken not to let them become overweight as this may lead to orthopedic issues.
- 4. Do they shed?** It is commonly said that Swissys shed twice a year (the first half, then the second half).
- 5. Do they drool?** While considered a dry-mouthed breed, they are messy drinkers and tend to wipe their mouth on your sofa, rug or pants leg after tanking up.
- 6. Are they friendly towards children and other animals?** GSMDs are happy, jovial, enthusiastic dogs that crave human attention and physical contact. If socialized properly they adore children and other animals, but they are large, powerful and sometimes boisterous. They can easily knock over a small child or elderly adult when playing. Most have a strong chase instinct and will try to herd moving animals and running children.
- 7. Are they good guard dogs?** Swissys are extremely aware of their surroundings and will alarm with a very loud bark when things are out of place or a stranger enters their domain. They will stand their ground and look intimidating, but they depend on their human to take care of the strange object or person. Once you have welcomed the stranger, they are happy to make a new friend.
- 8. Are they easy to train?** Swissys learn obedience commands very quickly with consistent positive training. They may require corrections for pulling, chasing and jumping. Due to their size and strength they must be taught physical control as a puppy. They are notoriously slow to housetrain and will definitely repeat rewarded bad behavior. They require socialization and boundary setting starting from a young age and into adulthood and do best with owners who take a firm pack leader role.
- 9. Do they bark a lot?** If they spot something “out of place” in their environment they will bark until their alert has been acknowledged by their human. If you are not at home to provide that acknowledgement, this could create an issue with the neighbors.
- 10. Where do you get a Greater Swiss Mountain Dog and how much do they cost?** You should seek out responsible breeders through the GSMDCA or by attending dog shows and talking to Swissy owners. While the purchase price could exceed \$1500, more consideration should be made for the cost of upkeep. Food, supplements, veterinary bills and medications are pricey for large breed dogs.
- 11. What types of activities are they best suited for?** Walking, Hiking, Back Packing, Carting, Herding, Swimming (if taught to enjoy water at a young age). A number of Swissys are involved in agility, obedience, and weight pulling competitions.
- 12. Do they need a lot of exercise?** Swissys need a moderate amount of exercise, such as two long walks daily. They would not be a good jogging partner but would make an ideal hiking partner once they reached maturity.
- 13. How do they tolerate heat? Cold?** They love snow but dislike cold water. They do not tolerate heat and will need air-conditioning during the hot summer months. Over exposure in hot weather can lead to heat stroke.
- 14. Do they have any health issues?** Most common problems are extra eyelashes (distichiasis) and female urinary incontinence. A far less common, but the most debilitating disease in Swissys, is epilepsy. Bloat/Gastric Torsion and splenic torsion are two life-threatening illnesses we see in GSMDs. Orthopedic issues found in large breed dogs may also be an issue so careful feeding and age-appropriate exercise are a must. Responsible breeders will screen for hip and elbow dysplasia in breeding stock.
- 15. How long do they live?** About 10 years

National and Recognized Regional Clubs

Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Club of America

www.gsmdca.org

Cascade GSMDC

WA, OR, ID, MT, AK

www.cascadeswissclub.com

Chesapeake & Potomac GSMDC

Maryland, DC, Virginia, Delaware, and South Eastern Pennsylvania

www.cpgreaterswiss.com

Crooked River Swissy Club

Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia

www.crookeddriverswissclub.com

Glacial Lakes GSMDC

MN & Western WI

www.glgsmdc.org

Golden Gate GSMDC

Center of Activity: Vallejo, CA

www.goldengategsmdc.com

GSMDC of the Rockies

CO, NM, UT, WY and western KS, NE and OK

Center of Activity: Denver, CO

www.gsmdcr.com

Gulf Coast GSMDC

TX, LA, MS, AL

Center of Activity: TX

Lake Shore GSMDC

Northeastern IL & Southeastern WI

Center of Activity: Greater Chicagoland

www.lsgsmdc.org

Ozark GSMDC

MO, OK, AR

<http://ozarkswiss.webs.com/>

Southbound GSMDC

Southern U.S.

www.southboundgsmdc.org

Swissy Club of New England

New England, US

swissyclubofne.org

Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Rescue Foundation

www.gsmdrescue.org