

The movie *A Dog of Flanders* based on a favorite classic, opened in theaters on August 27, 1999. The book, written in 1872 by Ouida portrays a boy, Nello and his devoted dog, Patrasche. The story is about Nello's pursuit to become an artist, like his mother. In the movie version, Patrasche is portrayed by a Bouvier des Flandres named Napoleon.

Another new movie with Bouviers serving as "cast members" is *Town and Country*. This movie stars Warren Beatty, Diane Keaton, Goldie Hawn, Andie MacDowell, Jenna Elfman, Nastassja Kinski, and Gary Shandling. Comedy - A well-known New York architect at a crossroads in his life fumbles a few faux pas with his wife and longtime friends.

There is breed-wide concern that these movies will create problems for our breed similar to that experienced by Dalmatians and their devotees after the release of the film, *101 Dalmatians*. Dalmatian rescue continues to be overwhelmed with dogs in need of re-homing. The popularity of such movies often causes a flood of interest from the public and the unfortunate by-product of such interest invites unscrupulous breeding by those whose primary interest is in "filling orders". Impulse buyers are especially vulnerable. We, as lovers of the Bouvier, feel it is important to provide education for the buying public in an effort to provide education and resources regarding the breed, as well as information on how to purchase and/or adopt a bouvier from reliable sources.

Bouviers are large, powerful dogs, many weighing between 90 and 100 pounds. This breed is considered to be a herding breed i.e. a working breed. They were originally bred to drive cattle, protect the farm, and to pull carts for their family. They served in World War 1 and II as messenger and ambulance dogs. The breed came to the United States in the late 1920's as a result of the efforts of a few people when the Bouvier suffered terrible losses during the war. Today, Bouviers still serve in various capacities - as devoted companions, therapy dogs for patients in hospitals and nursing homes, working dogs on farms, police dogs, and assistance dogs.

Bouviers require obedience training, and owners should plan to continue their training throughout their lives. Dogs bred to "work" are generally bright and independent thinking. Without training, the breed often gets itself in trouble, sizing up the world from its point of view. Decision making made by the dog often is not suitable from the human's viewpoint. Proper obedience training will help guide the dog toward acceptable behaviors and increase the bond between dog and owner. Understanding the word "alpha" is

important to both dog and owner. Generally, Bouviers are very anxious to please their owners. Positive methods of training are well suited to them, as it enhances their natural instinct to please. An owner who is consistent in training and in every day life is important to the relationship with a Bouvier. Bouviers become easily confused when consistency is lacking, and often undesirable behaviors are exhibited as a result. Although, willing and quick learners, Bouviers are well known to have a stubborn streak. They may only need a few repetitions to learn something new, but may look at you the fourth time you command them to do something, with a look as if to say, "Hey, YOU do it! I know what to do! Don't you have something new we can do?" Bouviers will literally "quit" on an owner when bored, when trainers are inconsistent or overbearing, and if they are not given huge amounts of praise for ANY act performed well! If you do not have the time and patience to devote to this important aspect of life with a Bouvier, PLEASE rethink your decision.

Bouviers need plenty of exercise of both body and mind. The training mentioned above will accomplish some of this! As they are extremely intelligent dogs, they need a job to do. As perceived by the Bouvier, "jobs" include absolute involvement in any and all activities of the family and home! Again, the dog without the guidance of his owner will create his own (and not always acceptable) job description! This breed adores being with their people, and do not fair well as "outside" pets. Bouviers need and demand quality time from their family. They adapt easily from inside to outside activities. Content with more sedate activities indoors, they know how to "kick up their heels" when outside. They are very athletic. Fenced exercise areas are important, as herding instinct will catalyze the urge to chase. It is important that owners understand that herding traits are an offshoot of prey drive. The instinct to herd any and everything is strong and owners must be prepared to teach the dog the proper use of that trait. The desirable aspects of herding result in a dog with a strong sense of family and home (i.e. their "flock"), but unchecked may result in behaviors such as nipping out of frustration. Without proper training the dog may ultimately not be reliable with cats, small dogs, or perhaps children. Properly trained, they can be great with all of the above!

Bouviers are sometimes considered non-shedding, but in fact do lose a small amount of hair. They have a long, double coat. Most of the hair that they lose is "trapped" within the double coat which results in matting. Therefore, they need weekly brushing and combing to maintain the coat. The "groomed" version of the breed as seen at dog shows, movies, or on T.V. belie the appearance of the breed when ungroomed. In addition to weekly brushing, the coat must be trimmed by either the owner or groomer approximately every 6-8 weeks. The breed's trademark is a long, full beard and fall. Wonderful to behold, the reality is that the beard absorbs quantities of water whenever they drink and also catches an amazing amount of debris from the outdoors. For those with an immaculate home, think twice. Wet beards dripping water on the floor, or dripped across your legs are part and parcel in life with a Bouvier.

Bouvier des Flandres are wonderful dogs, but as you have probably concluded not for everyone. They suit many people and lifestyles. They are loving, devoted, intelligent and athletic companions. Those who love them, are as devoted to them as the dog is to his people. The success of owning and raising a Bouvier des Flandres is generally won through the combined efforts of committed owners who buy from breeders who assist them through any hurdles that dog ownership presents. Owning a Bouvier des Flandres can be wonderfully rewarding, but hinges on important criteria. Please avoid the temptation to act too quickly. Take the time to make well-researched decisions v.s. emotional ones. Peruse the resources listed here, read and read some more, visit with various breeders, visit dog shows, visit rescue volunteers and dogs. Don't skip any steps, time is on your side. Ask yourself honestly if they are right for you and you for them. If and when the right Bouvier des Flandres joins your life you, too, will repay their love with your own!

## The Facts:

1. The	Bouvier des Flandres is a large, strong dog bred to be a working dog . He is r
2. The	Bouvier des Flandres needs positive and ongoing obedience and &quot;everyday&
3. The	Bouvier des Flandres requires daily exercise and a fenced yard.
4. Socialization	is critical to raising a well-rounded Bouvier des Flandres suitable for
5. Bouvier	des Flandres are intelligent dogs and should be provided with quality fam
6. Bouvier	des Flandres require considerable time and money to keep them groomed.
7. The	Bouvier des Flandres have beards which soak up and distribute a variety of th
8. The	Bouvier des Flandres does not make a good &quot;outside&quot; dog. They have
9. The	Bouvier des Flandres is a herding dog and must be trained in how to use that

The American Bouvier des Flandres Club again encourages you to take the time to research our web site, and a host of others that contain good information on the breed. Please be sure to visit these other links for good Bouvier des Flandres information. To find other links, simply go to a search engine such as [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) or [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type in **bouvier** in the search field.

### **The ABdFC does not necessarily agree with views reflected in other web sites.**

There are also many books available to assist you in the search for breeds that will be correct for you, and the proper ways to locate and purchase or adopt quality animals. Again, careful research will reward you!

The American Bouvier des Flandres is happy to provide interested persons with a copy of the [\*Beginners Guide to the Bouvier des Flandres\*](#)

and/or a breeder's referral list. The publication provides a realistic overview of the breed, as well as information helpful to the public as they search for reliable breeders of quality animals. Concerned breeders put a great deal of effort into their breedings, the screening and placement of their puppies. They are very anxious to place the &quot;right&quot; puppy with

you, not just ANY puppy. Proof of health testing of sires and dams of litters is also an important consideration for the prospective owner. Diligent testing on the part of breeders is a show of commitment to the future well-being of the breed. Devotees of the breed are very concerned that unscrupulous and/or overbreeding will result in rampant health problems. For this, and many other reasons we provide you with resources for your education. Bouviers have had problems with Hip Dysplasia, eyes, and thyroid. OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) is an organization that evaluates hip x-rays for dysplasia and maintains a registry of these evaluations. CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) is an organization that consists of ophthalmologists who evaluate for eye problems and maintain a registry for these evaluations. A simple blood test can determine if a dog has thyroid problems. OFA does provide a registry for thyroid as long as certain requirements are followed with the actual test. Some Bouviers have had heart problems and many breeders are having Cardiac tests done on their dogs. The OFA also provides a Cardiac registry.

Some may ask why there is such concern about the impact of Bouviers being featured in movies. There are many Bouviers waiting in our rescue program (ABRL - American Bouvier Rescue League) for good homes. These dogs find themselves in need of re-homing in many cases, because the people that bought them discovered that this was not the right breed for them. An unhappy and often tragic situation for both dogs and people when life together does not work out. Often these dogs end up in shelters or pounds or if they are lucky into a Bouvier rescue program. Bouvier rescue programs consist of volunteers who are knowledgeable about the breed, take these dogs in and foster them while screening homes for the placement of these dogs in the right environments for them additionally assuring the owner that this is the proper dog for them. Dogs available for adoption through rescue programs are current on shots, spayed or neutered, tested for heartworm and parasites, housebroken, and often have basic obedience training. These dogs deserve a loving and permanent home, and are a wonderful choice for many people!

PLEASE call, write or e-mail with any additional questions you may have PRIOR to purchasing or adopting a Bouvier. Read, research, and soul-search. The Bouvier des Flandres is a living, breathing, and loving being who is counting on your commitment lasting it's lifetime!