

Educating yourself on the South African Boerboel!

In 1996 while researching the Performance American Bulldog I was gathering as much information on the breed as I could obtain. During my material “absorption” phase I had purchased a book called “Gladiator Dogs” by Dr. Carl Semencic. One of the chapters within the copy featured a breed I was never aware of the “South African Boerboel”. Immediately I was drawn to this magnificent canine. I knew sometime in the future I would own one and switch my research focus specifically on them.

Flash forward to 2012. I was once again looking to add a guardian companion to my growing family. I wandered to my vast collection of breed and dog books and immediately grabbed “Gladiator Dogs” off the shelf. The time had come to narrow in on this breed and learn as much as possible to be as prepared as possible for this new member of the family. I began with my usual tactics to start my journey. Buying up additional “ALL Breed” dog books just to digest the small little inserts and blurbs about the Boerboel that existed. I was surprised how many supposed all breed books lacked any information on the breed at all. This both intrigued and frustrated me as I knew the process was going to be difficult to obtain the material I desired. Numerous searches for any books specifically geared toward the South African Boerboel yielded slim results. Of course there was the typical general breed books that are pumped out lacking any solid concrete information. I look at those as the “insert here” manuals where basically the template is for any breed and as they change they simply reword the breed of focus within. That was not what I wanted. I needed sources that covered everything about the breed I would want to learn to better prepare myself so I knew exactly what I was getting to make certain this dog was the one I wanted to be part of my growing family.

And so it begins.....

Night after night I would go on the internet and collect data from various sources to begin building my portfolio consisting of all South African Boerboel research and information. As we all know the internet can be tricky for information. It really boils down to making certain the source of the evidence is credible and how it was obtained in the first place. That in of itself was a challenge to gather the data and then verify it. I was on a quest to obtain all I could and absorb as much intelligence as possible. Part of my tactics was to find out dates the Boerboel had appeared in dog magazines and then find those editions to consume the facts. Thankfully we have eBay! I made record of the various editions and magazines and tracked them down acquiring and adding to my growing portfolio. I had even tracked down an author via LinkedIn and asked if she could send me what she had written in an old issue.

Needless to say my journey of education and knowledge was long, vast and enjoyable. Using a variety of methods including emailing, authors of books, articles and documents to get hold of what they had compiled. Assembling their research and piecing all together was fascinating and a tremendous learning experience which I will be eternally grateful for all that was willing to help me on my quest. There was one breed book that was somewhat considered the “holy grail” by many. “The Boerboel, South Africa’s Own” by Anemari Pretorius. This was now on my radar and I had to get my hands on a copy. I would continue to probe night after night through many sources till one day whether by chance, fate or luck I stumbled across an auction site in South Africa. I noticed no bids existed so I bypassed the

bidding process contacted the seller and worked out a deal. SUCCESS! Another feather in my cap of knowledge of this magnificent breed.

As time went by I would continue to add pieces to my master file and build by database on Boerboel information. Each day I knew this was going to be the next breed for me. I started incorporating my search to narrow down the breeders I would look to contact and assess when the time came to purchase my new pup. This proved to be another challenge. As with all breeds there are many who claim they are “breeder” but the numbers are scarce as far as which ones exhibit high quality standards and practices. Just another obstacle to navigate and conquer. As part of my searches, I would visit online forums, chat rooms and Facebook. I never had a FB account so would only visit what was public and I could see. It was then that the Genesis of helping others learn about this breed had reared its head. I opened up a FB account and joined several Boerboel related groups. I realized the groups were a great concept and outlet to really learn and educate yourself about a breed because you were dealing with such a diverse pool of individuals involved. You had veterans and newbies all mixing and swapping information creating a phenomenal mix and match of insight and advice. I liked the concept of the group atmosphere but wanted to add my personal touches and offer up all I had obtained to the fellow Boerboel enthusiast.

www.boerboelowner.com is born! April 28th 2016 simultaneously when obtaining the domain name I had created a FB group known as “Boerboel Owners”. I wanted to allow all those interested in the breed one spot for learning what they could about it. I instantly uploaded the contents of my immense collection to the group and wanted all to process it. I truly believe an informed and educated owner is a responsible and prepared owner. Lack of education in my opinion, is one of the main reasons dogs are given up on. Owners tend to not understand all they are getting themselves into with certain breeds and make spur of the moment decisions that wind up costing the dog time and again. I wanted to do my part to help prevent that whereas it related to the South African Boerboel. I knew the process I had to go through to learn about this breed was way too time consuming and inconvenient for those who don't enjoy the hunt of the search. It is not productive to have information so scarce and hard to review when one is trying their best to learn about their dog. I wanted to change that. I started marketing the group through various channels including social media sending tweets, Instagram shots, hashtags, and all methods I was familiar with. They started to come together and the group began to grow daily. Surpassing similar groups who had been around for years in a matter of weeks and months. Now less than a year old with over 7000 members and growing it is the largest knowledge based South African Boerboel Group on Facebook. I take pride in knowing that I am creating a forum for all to learn, share, grow and educate one another in a comfortable drama free (to the best of my ability) platform.

My one and only goal is to educate the public on this extraordinary breed. To reiterate an educated and prepared owner is a secure and capable owner. It is vital for any and all who are intrigued by the breed to understand everything relating to the breed, the good and the bad. I don't want those that are interested to have to face the hunting and pecking I had to do in order to get a full picture relating to the Boerboel. The group creates one source for all to engage learn and cooperate. I do want to make special mention to my moderators who without them the group would not be possible as it has become a great undertaking to manage and regulate. Each one is unique in their background regarding the breed and brings invaluable management to the group: Thank you Sibs Blankenship, Jay Austin, Kim Bazaar, Carlee Baird, Janet Carr, Teri Herrera and Jacen Mary Johns for making the group the success that it is!