

Kennel Design

We at Banffy Haus German Shepherd have been heavily involved with the German Shepherd breed for over a decade and a half now, and have thoroughly enjoyed our journey with this majestic, loyal, wildly intelligent, regal breed with diverse skills and aptitudes. The breed is rated as one of the top three most intelligent in the world, but far surpasses all of the other top dogs in terms of its wide use in diverse service functions from drug sniffing and protection to early alert dogs for the handicapped and SAR. We have placed dogs as elite service dogs for the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to dogs for the handicapped including those with no sight or auditory function to those with neuromuscular diseases. What a privilege to know that a dog we have placed was able to bless someone as their eye and ears.

At this point in our journey we have decided to share through a series of articles, what we have learned about building and running a small, but high quality German Shepherd kennel, at a reasonable cost. Often I hear my breeder colleagues saying that one cannot make a profit in this business and that it is a labor of love for the breed in which one will operate at a loss. This is just not true. One can do an excellent job of honoring the breed with careful breeding practices, treat these dogs with the dignity they deserve, feed them top quality food, place them with wonderful families, and still be able to earn enough money to support your operations and make a reasonable profit with a small, elite, high quality operation. I will try to give you some pointers as to how this is done. I am not worried about sharing secrets and creating competitors, or motivating the proliferation of GSD breedings. If one were to follow good breeding practices and attempt to create a safe, secure, and healthy environment for the breed, then I believe you will be a tribute to the breed. Too many breeders compromise where one doesn't have to (such as with food). Then there are those who build mega-kennels with the sole goal of profiting from the business. There are some wonderful breeders who do things better than we. But, we do try to do our best to live up to high quality standards for our kennel operations and have found ways to do this without compromising cost.

I would like to now take a few minutes to help you with kennel design. I have tried many things over the years, and my current kennels are a culmination or that research. I love the current kennel design. I could have done even better and will, in retrospect, include these recommendations as we go. There are many ways to do this, and many better than we have used. We are just sharing our experience in hope that it might be useful to you.

The building

Of course there many kennel designs, some with steel buildings, concrete block professional kennels, etc. But what we have found works for us, and can maintain the aesthetics of a private non-commercial site at a reasonable cost is the use of

Amish/Mennonite treated wood barns. They come on skids and can obviate increased property taxes due to the fact that they are not permanently affixed to a foundation. I use about a 12x24 lofted barn for four full 5x10 kennels and one fifth smaller temporary kennel (4x10) for visiting dogs or dogs imported for other clients and just passing through. I think it would be a little better to have a bit more space in the width, maybe 14 instead of 12 foot would be fine. The price for these buildings is about \$ 5,500-6000. And they will put in a loft (I use only about 8 feet of loft which become the roof for my nursery), and build wooden shelving and a workbench as part of that price. I would go with a steel roof. Make sure to get the treated flooring unless they have treated tongue and groove.

Preparing the site

After ordering the building make sure to adequately level the site around one foot either side wider for the pad than the building is. I use "crush and run" at least 4 inches and then well compressed down. It forms a nice firm foundation for the kennel. Pay attention to drainage issues to make certain if you have a lot of water coming in at the back of the barn, to put in a French drain to direct water away. Also, prepare the site with anticipation of the concrete pad you will be pouring for the kennels, and the kennel septic system you will be putting in. Once the barn is in, it will be expensive to re-adjust anything.

MUCH MORE TO COME!