



BLACK IRON BOERBOELS

BLACK IRON BOERBOELS IS LOCATED ON A SMALL WORKING FARM JUST OUTSIDE OF FAIRMOUNT, INDIANA (USA).

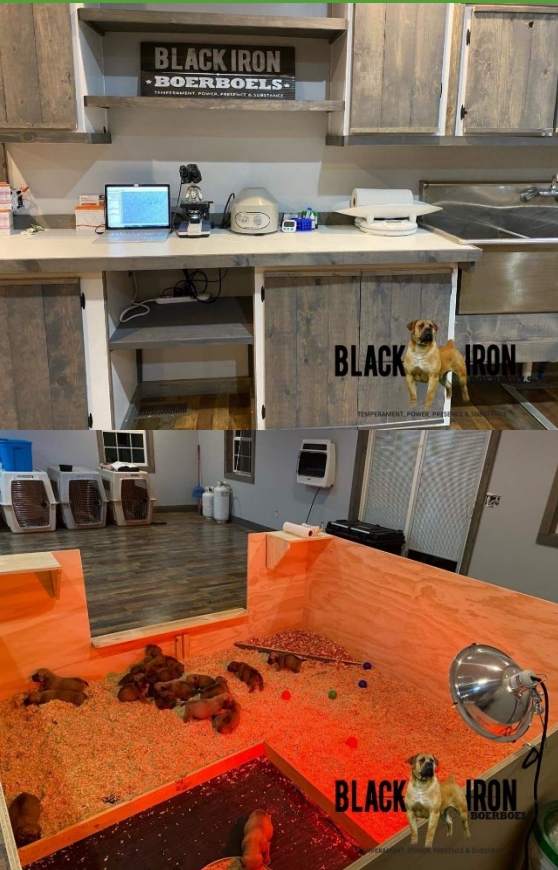
My dog journey began with German Shepherds, which is the breed that I primarily grew up with. It all started back in grade school with a poorly bred German Shepherd named Pepper, whom I trained to pull us (as well as the neighbouring farm kids) around in a little red wagon during the summer or on a sled in the winter. She was an amazing dog that worked very hard at many things. I imported my first German Shepherd from Europe when I was a kid, and at that time my passion was working towards obedience titles. My parents tolerated and supported my passion as they hauled me all around the surrounding states to trials as they supported my dreams. I picked up a Dog World magazine while coming home from a trial one day, and I found a GSD breeder that had just imported a male in from East Germany. This was many years ago as the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany was still up at that time. My female that I was working on titling just so happened to come into season that day, so we stopped by their kennel on our way home to see the newly imported dog. That was also my first time seeing Schutzhund, as their club was training on that day. It was that experience on that day which made me realize one thing. I wanted to become a serious breeder. Not just any breeder, but a really good one. I immediately became obsessed with all of the genetics behind the dogs and for the next 20 years they were a pretty intense passion.

After breeding German Shepherds for decades and eventually getting out of the very high drive working dogs due to life changes, I began searching for my ideal farm breed only with less intensity than my GSD's. Keep in mind the GSD's that we had been breeding for years were not typical. We had been breeding on the extreme end of the working scale so the drive on these dogs was much more intense, and the aggression was far more real. My circumstances at that point meant that I was no longer able to train frequently, and my dogs were mentally bored and overloaded with drive. They were not good with farm animals and they wreaked havoc on the kids live 4H projects! I decided that we needed a change, so I started looking.

As a single mom at that point, I wanted something that would have a physical presence to it which would make someone think twice about anything but also a dog that would not become a prey monster. I found the Boerboel during a search one day and began calling breeders in South Africa to learn more. I studied them for years before purchasing our first Boerboel from South Africa in 2014. Initially I had zero intentions of breeding, but after owning one we immediately fell in love with the breed and now here we are.

Black Iron Boerboels officially came to life in 2015, and we imported from 3 different kennels that year. After many conversations with my dear friend Beverli at Klein Sandfontein, I told her that I was finally ready to add another male and she offered a special litter. I ended up picking a male puppy from the KS Huey and KS Asara pairing and apparently picked right. The pup we picked out was KS Judge who would later become the highest linear appraised Boerboel in the World. I knew that he was special and I have always been blessed with a good eye for nice dogs, but I had no idea that he would become what he did. Prior to the day he was appraised at 93.4%, very few people knew who we were as breeders.

After he was appraised, we became globally recognized and have had many visitors from around the world visit us over the years. He has been a blessing in so many ways! Judge is like one of my kids and he goes everywhere with me. His is my best buddy and my fiercest of guardians. The fact that he has been such a fertile Boerboel is a huge perk in this breed. He stamps many of his offspring with his signature wide/deep chest and shoulder, especially his daughters. His genetic contribution has yet to fully be seen, but there are enough known breeders here in the US that have since added Judge offspring into to their programs which I think speaks volumes. I have always said that I expected the best of Judge would be seen in his grandkids, and I can strongly see his influence



many generations down. We have been very blessed with our program and what we have been able to accomplish in such a short window of time.

Black Iron Boston is a good example. She is the highest scoring SABBS brindle on the linear with a 91.3%. She originally missed stud register by like a small margin, and Kenny Van Der Merwe made me promise to get her re-appraised the following year after maturing. He was right! Some of our pups have grown up to be very good producers. I am proud of them all and for their contributions to the breed, but I also recognize that I didn't do it on my own. Others paved the way by producing good dogs before I ever came into the Boerboel breeding picture. I started with some really good dogs, and in some cases picked up where others left off to make my own way.

Health testing certifications have always been a big thing to me, and I have been doing so since the late 80's. My goal is not ever to produce the biggest most amazing dog. My goal is always to produce the healthiest, most well-balanced, stable dogs and if they end up easy on the eyes then that is a huge bonus! Not enough emphasis is placed on cardiac checks in my opinion. This can be done at a minimum with simple auscultation. Years ago, I had a very fit and athletic young female that could chase me off and on all day. She never wore down. When I took her in for testing, it resulted in finding that she had SAS. Just because a dog looks and acts perfectly healthy, that doesn't mean that it is. Much like people. When it comes to hips and elbows, it has taken us years to get to where we are now with consistently solid scores in our program. I have seen dogs with femoral heads not even close to being in the socket, yet because of heavy muscling it could not be seen to the eye.

Because we now have the foundation that we have, I would not be afraid for example to use a dog in the program with less than perfect hips if I know what is behind that dog to be good. The only true way to know what you are breeding is to test it. It helps breeders to make a better educated decision on who best to pair with a less than perfect dog. It doesn't mean you have to eliminate the dog for less than stellar X-rays for example, but it does mean that you can work to breed around it if the breed benefits from use. You can't fix it if you don't know about it.

Occasional breeding issues decades ago is what started my passion with fertility, which is what has led me to where we are today! We have a 1000+sq foot room addition on our home which serves as my own personal fertility laboratory and whelping area. This addition has been priceless to our breeding program. I am able to do everything for ourselves here in house from analysing semen to progesterone testing, TCI's/AI's, pregnancy ultrasounds and more. We do store frozen semen here not just for ourselves but for others both here and abroad. I have now been breeding dogs for 36 years, and the vast amount of experienced gained is priceless. Because I have the tools that I have, I am able to learn that much faster. You can read books all day long, but living it puts a whole different spin on it.

One of the biggest things that I tell people is to breed for the breed, and for yourself. You will never make everyone happy and breeding just to impress others should not be your goal. Be your biggest critic, and always recognize that no matter how much you think that you know, you can always learn more. If you find a true advocate for this breed that is willing to teach you, then soak it up like a sponge. It is far easier to learn from someone else's mistakes than to bear the tears and financial burden of learning on your own. I will never be too proud to take advice from others. ALWAYS be humble. If you aren't, Boerboel breeding will eventually put you in check, or in the hole. One of the two.

Things that I would change with the breed. Public education. I feel like many times it is the blind leading the blind due to social media. I would like to see more with regards to training the public on correct temperament and structure and what makes it such. I would like to see more uniformity. At times I see proud owners posting dogs in their programs that they don't realize have serious structural issues. Some of which are health concerns, but sadly they don't know any better. I would like to see SABBS offer online training videos which explain and show what is ideal and why it is ideal. Same goes for temperament. These dogs are not for everyone, and it is up to breeders to help weed out the less than ideal homes.

As for changes I feel that the breed is becoming too large, that the original temperament is not a priority, nor is athleticism, and that the lifespans are being cut far too short. I don't consider the Boerboel to be the same type of working dog that I began with and to be honest if that were the case nobody would want to live with that level of drive in the form of 150 lbs. But...I do believe that this breed needs more balance and consistency overall, and I also believe that lack of knowledge has much to do with why these are now key concerns to many. Just because two dogs are beautiful, that doesn't mean they should be paired. There is far more to it than that. I am my own biggest critic, and though I am highly competitive it is only with myself as I am the one making the choices in our program. It was a lot for me to write this as I am not a "look at me" type of person. I am more of a been there done that type, and I prefer to do my own thing in more of a low key fashion and help others from behind the scenes when I have time.

