

JUDGING THE GERMAN WIREHAISED POINTER

By Judy Cheshire – GWPCA Judges Education Coordinator

The German Wirehaired Pointer is first and foremost a versatile hunting dog. It was developed by a pragmatic people to find game, point it and retrieve it on both land and in water and to blood track wounded game, as well. Its' quarry was varied and ranged from upland birds and waterfowl to rabbit, fox and roe deer. The terrain that these dogs hunted was diverse and besides versatility, adaptability was a key goal in its development. In this breed, a good percentage of the dogs that you'll see are in some way utilized in the field. Therefore, prioritizing by function is the most positive way that you can judge. The essence of the breed is a rough coated, athletically built, versatile hunting dog – *practical, low maintenance, efficient*.

Many judges don't see significant numbers of German Wirehaired Pointers. This, in itself, makes it a difficult breed for some to evaluate. Additionally, it's often misrepresented as a German Shorthaired Pointer with a rough coat and furnishings ---it is, rather, a breed onto itself and not, nor was it ever, a "variety". Our standard, just like many other breed standards, doesn't always present a crystal clear picture of its intent and interpretation can be difficult. There are also no disqualifications in our standard. That doesn't mean that "anything goes" or that no matter how much an individual dog deviates from the standard, it should be awarded championship points.

When a class of German Wirehaired Pointers enters the ring, get a first impression of the dog that you're judging. The silhouette of the dog should be immediately identifiable as a GWP. Is the outline

pleasing, is the dog balanced, is there substance without coarseness? Do you get the impression of athleticism and good capacity for muscling? As you put your hands on the dog to evaluate him, remember that this dog should be sound, both physically and mentally, and functional. "Function" is the key to all aspects of the standard. For example, if you have a dog with a light eye and one with a soft, open coat, keep in mind that the dog can see with an undesirable colored eye, but cannot be protected in dense, harsh cover or in cold water with a bad coat. Approach the dog from the front so that it can see you and confidently put your hands on him. Wirehairs usually have a strong sense of self and their personal space. Not a breed you should stare at or "coo" at!





The head from the side, should give a rectangular appearance, the impression of two rectangles with parallel planes and relatively

equal length. Facial furnishing (beard and eyebrows) should be present, in order to be protective, but not overdone. Eyebrows should appear natural and are never scissored and our GWPs should not be trimmed to look like terriers or Giant Schnauzers.

Don't necessarily penalize a dog for sparse facial furnishings as very

often excellent coated dogs do not have abundant furnishings.

Remember that the

coat on the dog's skull should be naturally short and close fitting. The ears are rounded at the tips, not too broad and hang close to the head and should be set just above the level of the eye. The correct bite is scissors and complete dentition is preferred.

When examining a dog's mouth, there's no need to count teeth, but large gaps should be noted. The jaws are strong and should be sufficiently deep to carry game. The eyes are brown and slightly oval in shape. A dark eye is very pleasing and adds to the correct expression of the dog. Although we have dogs with lighter eyes in the breed, we are rarely seeing the yellow "bird of prey" eyes that were more common years ago. A young dog may have a lighter eye with a darker ring around the iris. They will darken over time, sometimes taking up to three years to achieve their adult color. Eye rims should

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be close fitting to keep out irritating seeds, grasses and other irritating debris. The nose is brown, never black or flesh colored.

The neck is slightly arched and should have enough length and strength for the dog to retrieve and easily carry a good-sized pheasant or goose.

Proportionately, the body from the sternum to ischium is slightly longer than from withers to ground. The forechest is defined, with the brisket extending to the elbow, enabling good heart and lung capacity. Although the chest is developed, it shouldn't be so wide as to interfere in any way with the action of the forelegs. The back is short and strong with a perceptible slope from withers to croup. Perceptible means that you should be able to recognize that there is a slope, it doesn't mean exaggerated. Ribs are well sprung and the underline

extends well back to form a gradual tuck-up, which is apparent. The croup is gently rounded, showing no

tendency to fall away sharply and the tail is a continuation of the spinal column and should be carried at or

above the horizontal when the dog is moving and alert. The entire outline of the dog should flow smoothly.

Although the standard calls for the tail to

be docked to approximately two-fifths of its original length, this is often a personal preference and the



docked length is obviously man-made. The length of a docked tail is not a reason to ever fault an otherwise good dog. The feet of a GWP are webbed and slightly oval in outline, with toes well arched and close. A tight foot with good depth of pad protects the dog from stones, sand spurs, burrs, thorns and other sundry hazards on the ground while hunting. Shoulders should be well laid back with hindquarter angulation balancing that of the front. Good angulation facilitates a smooth, ground-covering stride and balance of those angles enable correct foot timing and promotes endurance in a dog that is working. The gait is harmonious, effortless and purposeful and the topline should remain firm when the dog is moving. The standard mentions that the “leg bones are flat, rather than round”.....in reality, the bone is oval, not flat.

The natural functional double coat is the hallmark of the breed. The standard states that “a dog must have correct coat to be of correct type”. The coat is weather resistant and to some extent, water-repellent. The outer coat is straight, harsh, wiry and flat lying. It is long enough to protect the dog against the punishment of rough cover, but not so long as to hide the outline of the dog. The coat on the skull and ears is naturally short and close fitting, however the ears may have wisps of longer hair or a “fringe”. The undercoat is softer and shorter and may be dense enough in winter to insulate against the cold but may be quite thin in summer – But, undercoat should always be present to some degree. Leg furnishings should not be excessive and should have some wiry texture. The hair in the liver body patches may be shorter than the rest of the outer coat. The correct puppy coat may be shorter than that of an adult coat but will show some signs of the

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coarse texture. The coat on this breed was originally intended to be “wash and wear”, designed by a pragmatic people who would not be bothered with a high maintenance coat. However, there are many inconsistencies in coat type and texture. It is not uncommon to see a smooth coat. Obviously this is incorrect. A shorter, harsh coat with wiry texture and evidence of guard hairs is perfectly acceptable.

Soft, woolly or cottony coats are not protective and should be penalized. They merely tend to attract dirt, burrs

and seeds and are detrimental in the water. Coats should not be clipped or scissored---there should be no need for it. Bad coats can be trimmed and made to appear quite acceptable, but a judge can only evaluate what is presented to him. Excessive grooming to present a dog artificial in appearance is truly not desirable in this breed.





The color of the dog is liver and white and may have roaning, ticking or patches; or it may also be solid liver, sometimes with a white blaze on its chest or with some amount of white on its feet. In relation to our standard, “liver” can vary in shade from chocolate to dark seal brown, and can appear to be almost black in certain lighting. A liver and white or solid liver dog will **always** have a brown nose, as is required in the standard. Although the standard says that “any black in the coat is to be severely penalized”, I have never seen a liver or liver and white dog with any black in its coat and I don’t believe that it is genetically possible. If the dog has a brown nose, you can be assured that it is liver and white without any black in its coat. A black and white dog will have a black nose and is not accommodated in our standard, although it is acceptable in some other countries. The head and ears are also required to be liver, but a blaze on the head is perfectly acceptable, providing that the color around both eyes is liver. The beard of a dog may be discolored due to sun or saliva and should not be faulted. Judges should always be aware of the color of a dog and keep in mind that the standard calls for a liver and white dog.

Temperament is sound and reliable. A GWP may be aloof to strangers and initially cautious. This caution should not be misinterpreted as shyness. Temperament should always be sound and aggression toward people should never be tolerated.

Breeders of German Wirehaired Pointers have made every effort to keep bench and field dogs “one breed”. Considering the total number of GWPs registered, we have a very large number of Dual Champions and dual titled dogs. There have been several Dual Champion Best in Show dogs and it is not unusual for a Dual Champion to win the GWPCA National Field Championship. Wirehairs have become contenders in the show ring and at field trials. Judges can help us in our endeavor by keeping the working qualities of the breed in mind when evaluating our dogs. Above all, please don’t fault judge. Standards often point out faults and areas to be penalized without bothering to emphasize the importance of positive characteristics. Consider the dog as a total package and remember that our goal is to continue to produce dogs that can do what they were originally intended to do – hunt long, hard and intelligently.

For more information on GWP’s visit the German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America website.

www.GWPCA.com

