

Considering Breed Type

By Judy Cheshire

Knowing the verbiage of a standard doesn't necessarily give one the correct mental picture of a particular breed. Words, particularly adjectives, are often subjective or comparative. For example, a "medium sized dog" could mean a Springer Spaniel to one person and a Vizsla to another. The German Wirehaired Pointer standard defines the breed as a medium sized dog.

Words, sort of like statistics, can be presented to imply the analyst's point of view.....and with multiple analysts, there are a wide variety of mental images! Therefore, understanding breed type requires more than just reading the standard.



Type is a combination of characteristics that define a breed and make it unique unto itself. It includes the outline, size, proportions, balance and attitude of the dog as well as specific qualities that enable the dog to do the job it was developed for. The GWP is a rough coated, athletically built, versatile hunting dog that is practical, low maintenance and efficient. Let's look at some of these characteristics.

The German Wirehaired Pointer standard states "A dog must have a correct coat to be of correct type." Harsh, wiry and flat lying, 1–2" in length, naturally short and close fitting on the skull with medium length facial furnishings. The coat does not hide the outline of the dog nor should it be excessively groomed to enhance the silhouette. A correct, double coat protects the dog from punishing cover, helps to shield it from inclement weather and remains relatively easy to care for. According to the standard, dogs are 24–26" at the withers, bitches slightly less, but not under 22". This gives quite a bit of latitude in the size of bitches as they can differ as much as 3 ½". Good substance, without coarseness, should be relative to size. As long as the dog (or bitch) is within the standard, the only fault would be if a bitch appeared "doggy" or a dog appeared "bitchy". The German Wirehaired Pointer is a little longer than it is high, as ten is to nine. It is slightly "off square" measuring from the point of the shoulder to the back of the buttocks. From the ground to the elbow and from the elbow to the highest point of the withers, the distance should be equal. The shoulders are well laid back with the angulation of the hindquarters balancing that of the forequarters. Correct angulation facilitates a smooth, ground covering stride and balance of those angles enable correct foot timing which promotes both endurance and agility in a dog that is working. Size, balance and proportion all contribute to performance. These dogs have a strong sense of self. They are intelligent and should be confident. These traits show in their overall carriage and contribute to the cooperative spirit they need to be a "team player" with their handler in the field.

Knowing the characteristics of correct type will come together when you see an outstanding example of the breed. There are also gradients within the right type, so you can have the right type but not necessarily a "good one" of that type. For example, dogs – for multiple reasons - may not use themselves well when they move, or they can have a fault (or several faults) related to function that may decrease their merit. A trait that interferes with the job that the dog was developed to do is a more serious fault

than a trait that makes the dog aesthetically pleasing. There are also sometimes styles within type. Styles may be produced or promoted by breeders when they find something that is particularly pleasing to them. Heads, perhaps exaggerations in length of neck or slope of topline and overall substance are characteristics that may be stylized. This should not necessarily change breed type but it is something that is recognizable. Style belongs to fashion, culture and, perhaps, demographics. It's not necessarily a bad thing and may be thought of as a "variation on a theme".

Learning breed type is a matter of observing as many dogs as possible over time, discussing the global characteristics and more detailed traits of the dogs with long time breeders, watching application of conformation in the field and reflecting on the improvement or decline of depth of quality within a breed. Type is set because a dog has a function or purpose and is something that will endure over generations.



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