

Is A German Shorthaired Pointer (GSP) Right For You?

It is a special time in your life. You are considering acquiring a GSP from a reputable breeder, and making it part of your family. You have decided to welcome a new dog into your home, making it part of your family, your life. This is a lifetime commitment that, like any relationship, should not be taken lightly and can present its share of challenges. Many things should be considered and many questions asked prior to selecting the breed and dog that would be appropriate for you, your family and your lifestyle:

Why do I want a dog?
Does my family want a dog?
What am I looking for in a dog?
Will I have the time it requires?
The facilities it needs?
How large will it get?
How much maintenance will it need?
What are its characteristics?
How will it deal with strangers (both human and animal)?
How difficult and how necessary will training be?

These are just a few of the many questions that should be considered before selecting the breed and dog that is best suited to you, your family and your lifestyle. German Shorthaired Pointers (GSP) are not the breed for everyone. They certainly are not for the faint of heart or weak of spirit! They are a special breed with specific needs.

GSPs were originally bred with several definite goals in mind:

- A versatile, tireless hunting dog capable of hunting feathered and furred game
- Pointing or treeing as necessary
- Retrieving to hand over land or water.
- Tracking wounded game.

GSPs retain a puppy level of energy throughout their lives. They require physical and mental stimuli to help keep this energy at a manageable level.

A family with an active lifestyle geared toward activities that would include the dog is ideal. Access to areas with plenty of room for running, such as the home property, the park, the woods, etc., is beneficial.

Devoting necessary time to fulfill a GSP's drive to "work" and learn through training and play and to satisfy his need for human companionship is essential.

A sense of humor should be a prerequisite for any future GSP owner. A GSP can be quite mischievous; its pranks often not appreciated by humans.

While GSPs are generally great with kids, care must be exercised around small children. A GSP's eagerness and playfulness could at times lead to unintentional injuries.

(Note: Proper introduction of children to any canine, regardless of breed, and teaching children appropriate behavior around dogs in general, is essential. To NEVER leave any dog unattended with an infant should be an absolute)

GSPs can be protective of their home and their humans.

As a very social and human friendly breed, the GSP loves to be around people and activity, and handles this well, assuming it has been properly socialized. The tendency to protect territory and "pack" can be present in some more than others. We recommend not encouraging this trait should it exist. GSPs are hunters. This does not mean they would be unhappy in a non-hunting home. It does, however, mean that other avenues to direct their energies may have to be found. GSPs get bored very easily if not kept busy. They are very inquisitive and can be quite inventive when entertaining themselves. Unfortunately, many things they consider fun (such as playing with all the neat toys in the kitchen garbage can, un-spooling toilet paper, digging in the flowerbed, jumping or climbing fences, shredding pillows or furniture, and the list goes on) we consider destructive.

GSPs are very people oriented, sometimes to the point of being clingy; following your every step around the house for example. They thrive upon human interaction to be truly happy. They do best, whether hunting, competing, or just kept as companions, if allowed to live as a part of the family unit as a housedog rather than a yard or kennel dog.

Training:

Training shapes the GSP, teaching it both control and confidence in obeying commands. They thrive upon structure and leadership, instinctively realizing the need for this.

GSPs tend to train easily, as they are a very biddable breed. As a working breed, they literally love and need to work.

None of the breed's characteristics are insurmountable obstacles. The key to success lies in realizing that these characteristics can exist and being prepared to deal with them. GSPs are very keen and will learn a variety of tasks presented to them. They are not only known as great hunting companions and accomplished Field Trial and Hunt Test Competitors, but have done well in the show ring, in obedience and agility trials, Search and Rescue (SAR), bomb and drug detection, sledding, and as human patient therapy dogs. To many GSP owners the most revered attribute of this breed certainly is the unwavering devotion and loyalty they bestow upon their human companions. They truly are a man's best friend.

Description:

The German Shorthaired Pointer is a clean-cut, lean, well-balanced, hunting dog with an elegantly chiseled head. The muzzle is long, but never pointed. The length of the muzzle should be the same as the length of the skull. Unlike the English Pointer, the occipital bone is not very conspicuous nor is there a pronounced stop. The almond-shaped eyes and nose are brown. The eyes have an intelligent, good-humored expression. A large nose is preferred. The larger the better. The broad ears are set high and lie close to the head. The teeth should form a scissors bite. The short, dense, sleek coat should be solid liver or liver & white, patched, ticked or roan. The only permitted colors are liver and white. The skin should be tight. The tail is customarily docked by 60% (the dog should be able to sit on his tail), and the dewclaws removed. The feet are webbed. The German Shorthaired Pointer is a little smaller than the standard Pointer.

Temperament:

The German Shorthaired Pointer is very energetic, smart and willing to please. Cheerful and friendly, he likes children. Loyal and protective, he loves all family members equally, especially if they are carrying the leash, car key, gun or Frisbee. They are very people-oriented, and not happy if isolated from the family. If exercised sufficiently once or twice a day, the German Shorthaired Pointer makes a very agreeable family companion. If left to his own devices for long periods without exercise or companionship, he can become destructive and nervous. Males tend to be more outgoing and are more aggressive hunters than females. Females tend to be less dominant. Energy levels vary somewhat, as litters bred for high performance field competition may require more activity than the average Shorthair. If raised with other dogs and cats from puppyhood, the German Shorthaired Pointer does quite well; however, he is a hunting dog by nature. This breed likes to bark and they are reserved with strangers.

Height, Weight:

Height: Males: 23-25 inches (59-64 cm.) Bitches: 21-23 inches (53-58 cm.)

Weight: Males: 55-70 pounds (25-32 kg.) Bitches: 45-60 pounds (20-27 kg.)

Health Problems:

Health problems are rare but may include hip dysplasia, entropion and epilepsy.

Living Conditions:

This breed is not recommended for apartment life and does best with a large yard and an athletic family. At least a 6-foot high fence is necessary. Bored Shorthairs can become escape artists. This breed does well in most climates.

Exercise:

Exercise is of paramount importance for these tireless energetic animals. They are more than a match for even the most active family and they should not be taken on as family pets unless they can be guaranteed plenty of vigorous exercise. If under-exercised, this breed can become restless and destructive.

Life Expectancy:

About 12-15 years.

Grooming:

The smooth coat of the Pointer is very easy to groom. Just brush regularly with a firm bristle brush and bathe only when necessary. A rub with a piece of toweling or chamois will leave the coat gleaming. Check the feet also, especially after the dog has been exercising or working. Dry the dog thoroughly after hunting to prevent chilling. Examine the ears regularly. This breed is an average shedder.

Origin:

Nineteenth-century German hunters required a dog with a good nose that would point within a reasonable distance for a man hunting on foot. The dog needed to retrieve both fur and feather, from water or land, and also be a fine tracker. The German breeding incorporated the Old Spanish Pointer, Hounds of St. Hubert, the Foxhound, other hounds, and eventually the English Pointer, which made it faster and more energetic. Today's German Shorthaired Pointer is the successful result of the German hunters efforts. The German Shorthair is a versatile hunter and an all-purpose gun dog capable of high performance in both field and water. He is a fine natural retriever, an excellent companion for a hunter on foot, and requires little training. The German Shorthaired Pointer is an ideal dog for the weekend hunter who also wishes to own a bright, agreeable family companion and watchdog. Due to the breed's natural ability, German Shorthairs are campaigned successfully in the show ring, obedience and tracking trials, field trials, and hunting tests.