



The
**German
Shorthaired
Pointer**

A discussion of the Standard
and thoughts on judging the breed,
with illustrations.

Lynn G. Butler





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Illustrations and design by
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn Butler and his wife Carolyn have been involved in GSP's since 1970. Under the Kazia prefix they have bred over 70 Champions, and have sent dogs to all Australian States, New Zealand, Sweden, USA, France, the Philippines, New Caledonia, Guam and Vanuatu, as well as importing both a dog and semen with notable success.

Nine All Breeds B.I.S., twelve Specialty B.I.S. winners and thirty-four Best in Group winners (for a total of nearly 100 B.I.G. awards) are some of the Kazia milestones to date. A past President, Lynn held several other positions within the GSP Society of NSW over almost 20 years. Starting with the Gundog Group in 1980, he is now All Breeds, having judged in most parts of Australia and New Zealand, as well as in USA, UK and Asia. Carolyn gained her breed licence in 1988, and is now approved for Gundogs, Toys, Utility and Non-Sporting Groups.

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Meisterzuchter Julius Mehlich with his foundation dog, Nero 66 (Hoppenrade) in 1883.
Photo: Courtesy, Kurzhaar Blätter, Germany.



NOTES ON JUDGING THE GERMAN SHORTHAIRED POINTER

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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

The German Shorthaired Pointer as we know it, is a relatively modern breed, with development continuing until well into this century. By the late twenties, it was considered by the German breed authorities that the desired qualities had largely been achieved and stabilised, and very little further legitimate incrossing has taken place since.

The breed came into being because of the need in Germany in the middle of the 1800's for a single all-purpose dog to replace the large teams of Pointers, Retrievers and Spaniels required to accomplish a day's variety of hunting, which by then, had ceased to be the exclusive realm of the titled or wealthy.

Their ideal was a dog capable of finding, pointing, retrieving (on land and from water), tracking wounded game, killing (e.g. fox) and protecting his master's property.

Bearing in mind that the only materials available to use in "constructing" this ideal were not necessarily ideal in themselves (the slow, cantankerous old Spanish Pointer, Schweisshund, excellent for tracking but not much more, and various other Continental pointing or retrieving breeds of the day), this was no easy task. Eventually with the infusion of English Pointer and a long period of selective breeding and culling, the turn of this century saw the GSP well established and taking its place as a highly regarded working breed.

The GSP was never meant to be as fast and flashy as the Pointer, or as consummate a retriever as the Labrador; but he can do the work of both, all day.

In 1872 the Klub Kurzhaar (German Parent Club) was formed to promote and protect the development of the breed and the first entries in the Stud Book were made in that year.

The European hunting fraternity took to the GSP with enthusiasm and the breed soon spread throughout the Continent. In the 1920's, GSP's were imported to the USA and Canada and after a fairly slow establishment period rose to become the most popular utility sporting dog in those countries, a position it holds to this day.

Introduction to UK took place after World War 11, with servicemen taking some Shorthairs back home from Germany. The British still generally prefer their specialist hunting breeds - Pointers, Setters, Spaniels, Retrievers, Terriers, Hounds - but the GSP nevertheless has achieved a major place in the Gundog scene, especially with roughshooters. Championship Show entries rarely fall below 175.

Introduced into Australia in 1962, his popularity has steadily increased over the years, and the GSP is now one of the top gundog breeds in the country, both in the field and at shows.

Roy Burnell, in his article on the breed in National Dog in 1977, said "... in the showing, the breed still has ground to make up to account for B.1.S. at 2000 plus fixtures ..." Well, since then, that feat has been achieved several times, and at smaller shows, a great many times. The GSP has, Australia-wide, become a major force in the Gundog Group.



BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The history of the German Shorthaired Pointer starts with the dogs which were used for hunting with nets on feathered game, especially in the Mediterranean countries, and in combination with falconry. The Pointers came to the German courts via France, Spain and Flanders. The most significant feature of these dogs was their pointing performance. After the first double-barrelled gun was made (1750), a pointing dog was required even more. "Game birds on the wing" were shot in full sight of the dog. That was the beginning of the transition from a mere pointer to a versatile gundog. The "Zuchtbuch Deutsch Kurzhaar" (Studbook) has been published since 1897 as the fundamental basis for the structure and development of the breed.

It was Prince Albrecht zu Solms-Braunfeld who compiled the breed characteristics, the judging rules for conformation and also, finally, simple trial regulations for hunting dogs. Today the German Shorthaired Pointer still passes through the filter of elaborate [detailed] breeding and trial regulations. The Standard stipulates the constitution of the German Shorthaired Pointer, as a versatile hunting dog, which enables him to perform all requirements in connection with hunting activities, even when advanced in age.



THE OLD SPANISH POINTER Painted by Stubbs (1724 ~1806).



Early German Pointers ~The breed in transitional stage.



JUDGING THE GERMAN SHORTHAIRED POINTER: THE STANDARD AND WHAT IT MEANS



The German Shorthaired Pointer is a “natural” breed, designed to be a practical, functional working gundog without exaggeration or concession to cosmetic appeal. It should therefore be a relatively easy breed to judge, a “what you see is what you get” breed, but it has become apparent to me over the years that a good number of Judges have difficulty coming to terms with it.

Perhaps the fact that “type” and “type within type” can be so mixed in the Shorthair does not help, but one rarely these days sees a really non-typical specimen. Judging then comes down mainly to sorting out the quality.

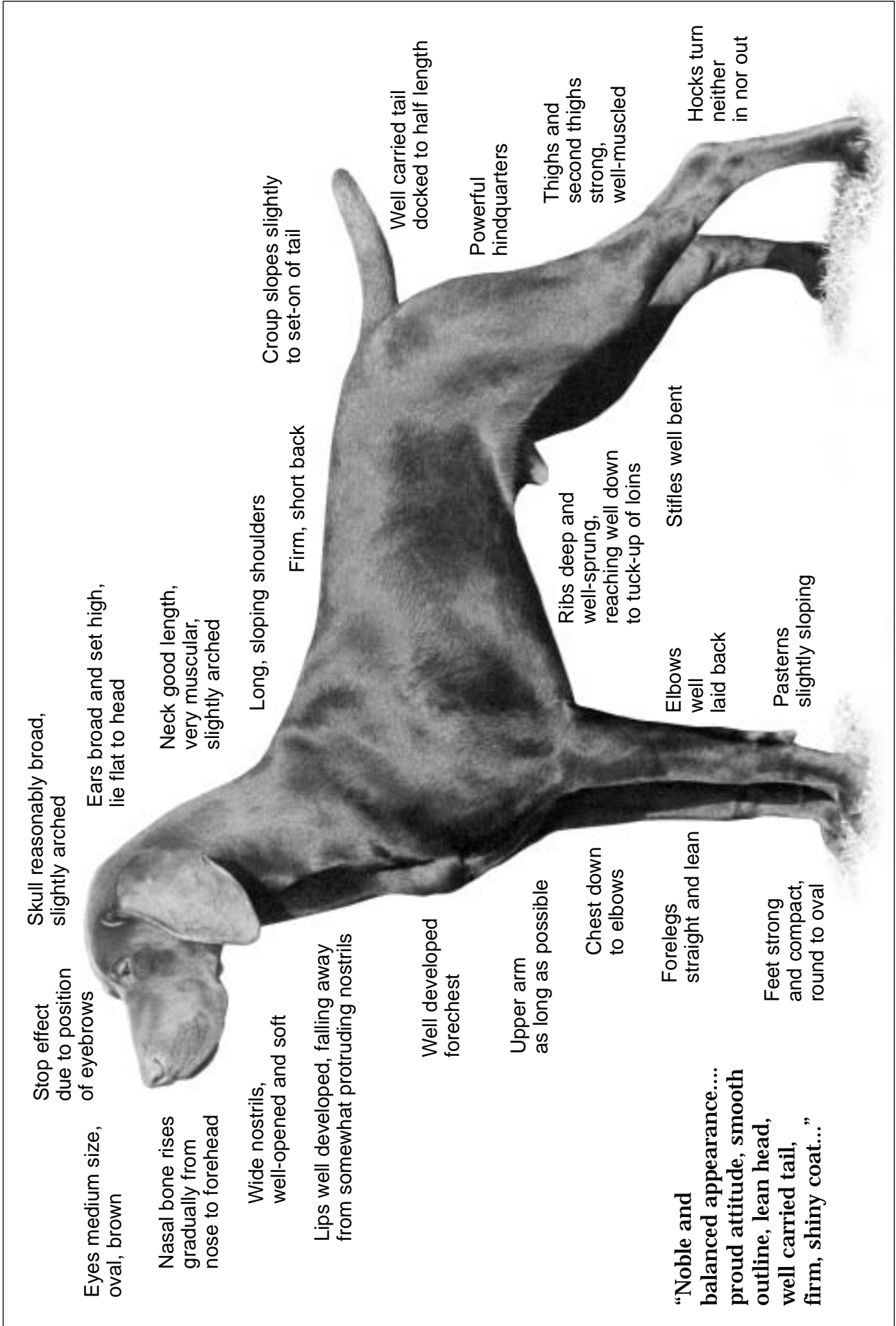
I am presuming for the purposes of this document that the reader has a general working knowledge of the GSP, and the Standard. My comments are directed at identifying and clarifying some of the niceties of the breed, and pointing out some of the problem areas.

“Form follows Function” is a well-worn adage of the canine world, but it is particularly apt in the case of the GSP. Remember, this dog was carefully developed by the methodical Germans to fill a particular need. They wanted a dog to scent, trail, point and retrieve on land or water, anything from the smallest game bird to hare, fox or the largest duck. It has to be strong, fairly speedy, with great endurance. It needs a very keen nose, great hunting instinct, perseverance and willingness. The physical attributes we can easily assess in the showing. The mental aspects are just as important but perhaps not quite so easy to pin down.

These notes offer my thoughts and understanding of the breed, based on over thirty years’ continuous involvement, in relation to the current FCI Standard No 119, adopted in Australia in 1996, updated 2001.

In the interest of clarity and emphasis, I have taken the liberty of abstracting the Faults from their lists and placing them under the relevant part of the Standard.







GENERAL APPEARANCE – A dog of noble and balanced appearance, the conformation of which ensures strength, endurance and speed. Proud attitude, smooth outlines, lean head, well carried tail, firm, shiny coat and far-reaching, harmonious strides, emphasise its nobility. Important Proportions - The length of body should slightly exceed the height at withers.

***FAULTS:** Faults in its attitude, not in accordance, or typical to gender.*

***SERIOUS FAULTS:** Clumsy, lymphatic (sluggish, lethargic); coarse boned conformation.*

***DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:** Distinctly non-typical gender characteristics.*

The overall picture of the GSP should be that of a well-balanced, symmetrical, confident dog with conformation indicative of strength, agility, speed and endurance. The term “noble” means the dog should be upstanding (“Proud attitude”), with confident, animated carriage and keen intelligent expression. Please note the FIRST descriptive word used here is “NOBLE” and the LAST is “NOBILITY”.

Please, NEVER lose sight of this quality when assessing the GSP!

He should not look either particularly small or large, but of good medium size. “Smooth outlines” requires balance of all parts and uninterrupted flow of neck into shoulder, smooth topline (slightly sloping from clearly defined withers to tailset), fore and hindquarter angulation sufficient and matching, ribs carried well back giving a slight but definite tuck up to the underline. Some prosternum should be apparent, and chest should reach down to elbows. There should be no “lumps or bumps”, sharp angles or excessive tuckup. ***A dog should look definitely masculine, a bitch clearly feminine.*** The gender of a mature GSP should be quite unambiguous, even from across the ring!

Tall, leggy dogs, or cloddy, heavily built dogs are untypical and should be treated accordingly, as should narrow, weedy specimens.

Muscular condition is important in a breed such as the GSP. Since it has no coat to hide under, musculature and overall condition is evident to the eye as well as the hand. Well-developed, strong muscles and ligamentation are required, and overweight, poorly muscled specimens should be penalised. Coats, of course, should be clean, shiny and dense.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS:

The length of body should slightly exceed the height at withers.

In the GSP, the distance from withers to ground should be SLIGHTLY less than the distance from point of shoulder to back of hindquarter. The accent here is definitely on the word “slightly”. The GSP is NOT a rectangular dog, it should be just off square. Excess length of back (in reality of coupling or loin) are a problem in the breed and quite WRONG.





CHARACTERISTICS – Utilisation - Versatile hunting dog.

The English and American Standards are more descriptive in this regard:

“Dual purpose Pointer/Retriever, very keen nose, perseverance in searching and initiative in game finding, excellence in field, a naturally keen worker, equally good on land or water.”

“The Shorthair is a versatile hunter, an all-purpose gun dog capable of high performance in field and water. The judgement of Shorthairs in the show ring should reflect this basic characteristic.”

These characteristics, that is, the whole reason for this breed's existence, are brought about by a combination of correct conformation, hunting/pointing instinct and, of the utmost importance to the show judge, correct temperament.

TEMPERAMENT – Firm, balanced, reliable, restrained [steady] temperament, neither nervous, shy nor aggressive.

DISQUALIFYING FAULT: *Weak character.*

This is as clear and specific as a Standard needs to be. Along with “noble”, please keep this description firmly in mind when judging GSPs.

The typical Shorthair is not a showy, flashy dog, but it should carry itself with confidence. It should be happy in the ring, and enjoy being examined. Shyness, cowering or viciousness to handler or judge should NEVER be tolerated. The “proud attitude”, “well carried tail” and “far-reaching, harmonious strides” specified in General Appearance are all indicators of good temperament. Their absence, therefore, is generally a sign of poor temperament. The tail usually tells the story. Except when standing quietly, a GSP should be using its tail to some degree. When being approached or examined, it should wag. When on the move it should be carried out and up (not gaily or upright!) showing alertness, happiness and confidence. A Shorthair who gaits with its tail clamped down has a definite temperament problem!

Too often we have seen nervy, wary, or downright cringing Shorthairs “forgiven” by judges, for whatever reason. Presumably because, on the day, they had the preferred conformation.

But if we are to judge to the Standard (and what else?) then GSPs who back off or cannot be handled in the normal show stance, no matter who the owner or handler, should be disqualified or at least no-awarded. And I mean, **NO AWARDED!**

Occasionally, some belligerence between mature males may occur in the assembly area, but should not be tolerated in the ring. Remember the primary role of the GSP – hunting – and consider the necessity for dogs to be able to get on with each other. Dogs with more interest in arguing than working are next to useless to the hunter or field trialler!

BAD TEMPERAMENT, either aggressiveness or nervousness has NO PLACE in our breed and the Standard demands that it must be treated accordingly. The Germans who placed “weak character” second only to “distinctly non-typical gender characteristics” in the list of DISQUALIFYING FAULTS did so quite deliberately!



HEAD AND SKULL

Lean, well defined, neither too light nor too heavy; as to strength and length it matches the substance and sex of the dog.

Skull moderately wide, slightly rounded, frontal furrow not too deep, noticeably developed superciliary ridges.

Ears of medium size, set on high and broad.

Eyes of medium size, dark brown.

Nostrils sufficiently wide, broad and mobile.



Bridge of nose shows a slight curvature.

Muzzle long, broad, deep and strong.

Nose somewhat protruding.



Occiput scarcely pronounced.

Stop moderately defined.

Topline of muzzle and skull approximately parallel.

Naso-labial line slopes almost vertically.

Lips tight fitting, not too pendulous.

Cheeks strong, well muscled.



*Three views of a typical, balanced adult male head.
Note appropriate depth and strength of foreface and underjaw.*



Now let's look at the various parts and their significance to the whole animal, starting with the:

HEAD AND SKULL – Lean, well defined, neither too light nor too heavy; as to strength and length it matches the substance and the sex of the dog.

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS: *Distinctly non-typical gender.*

Since the head is normally the first part of the dog to come to notice, and usually a major arbiter of “type”, it plays a key role in assessing the GSP. More than any other part, the head in this breed, is, here and everywhere else, variable in type. It is quite possible to have ten variations of head type on ten different GSPs, all fitting within these broad parameters. The message being strongly conveyed to us here, is that the head **MUST** be both in balance with the size and strength of the dog, and in keeping with its gender. Again, ***dogs must look decidedly masculine, and bitches unmistakably feminine.***

One should not need to look under the dog to ascertain its gender!

In fact, the head is the main and most obvious visual determinant of gender. A too-small, refined, feminine or snipey head on a male GSP, or an overly-strong, masculine head on a bitch are classic examples of “distinctly non-typical gender characteristics” and should be penalised, to the point of disqualification if sufficiently marked.

SKULL – Moderately wide, flatly [slightly] rounded skull, scarcely pronounced occiput, frontal furrow not too deep, noticeably developed superciliary ridges.

STOP – Moderately defined.

FOREFACE:

NOSE – Somewhat protruding. Nostrils sufficiently wide, broad and mobile.

Basically [generally] brown. A flesh coloured or spotted nose is only permissible in dogs with white as basic colour.

MUZZLE – Long, broad, deep and strong, in order to enable the dog to carry game correctly. Viewed from the side, the nasal bridge shows a slight curvature through all transitions, from a nobly constructed ram's nose to a slight rise above the straight line - it is more prominent in males. A totally straight nasal bridge, although still acceptable, is less attractive; a concave bridge (dish faced), is a serious fault.

LIPS – Tight fitting, not too pendulous, well pigmented. The naso-labial line slopes almost vertically and then continues in a slight curve to the moderately pronounced corner of the lips.

CHEEKS – Strong, well muscled.

FAULTS: *Muzzle too short; flews too heavy or too thin.*

SERIOUS FAULTS: *Snipey muzzle; concave bridge of the nose (dish faced); marked stop.*

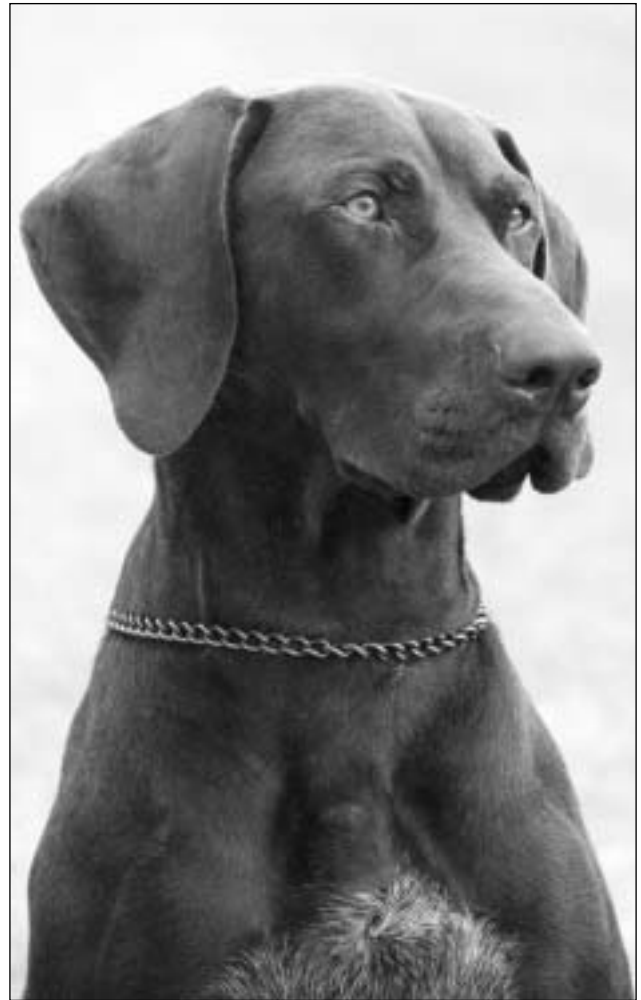
The Standard provides a very clear specification for head and skull. The main points to bear in mind are:

BALANCE: Muzzle and skull should be of approximately equal length, although you will find that the vast majority of Shorthairs are slightly shorter in muzzle than skull. Too-short muzzles are quite common, over-long ones very rare, but equally wrong. In turn, a balanced head should sit nicely on a matching neck, fitting harmoniously into the body.

PROFILE: Slightly rounded skull without pronounced occiput. Strong foreface and jaw, capable of holding and carrying a good sized duck or rabbit over long distances. Slightly roman nasal bone (the opposite of dish-faced) with a somewhat protruding, large soft nose at its tip. Toplines of muzzle and skull should be approximately parallel. Almost no stop, but the eyebrows, positioned on the supraorbital process of the frontal bones of the skull, create a definite “stop” impression from the side.

The lips should be soft and well developed, but not loose and pendulous as in the hound. Enough lip is enough – too much and it is likely to be the first thing bitten when the dog is dealing with a resisting animal. Equally, tight lips go with snipiness and as such, are most undesirable.



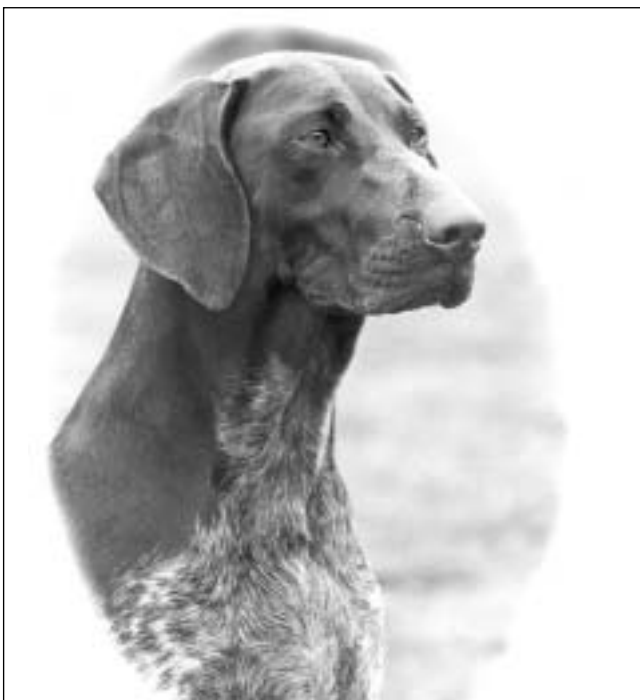


Some typical male heads.



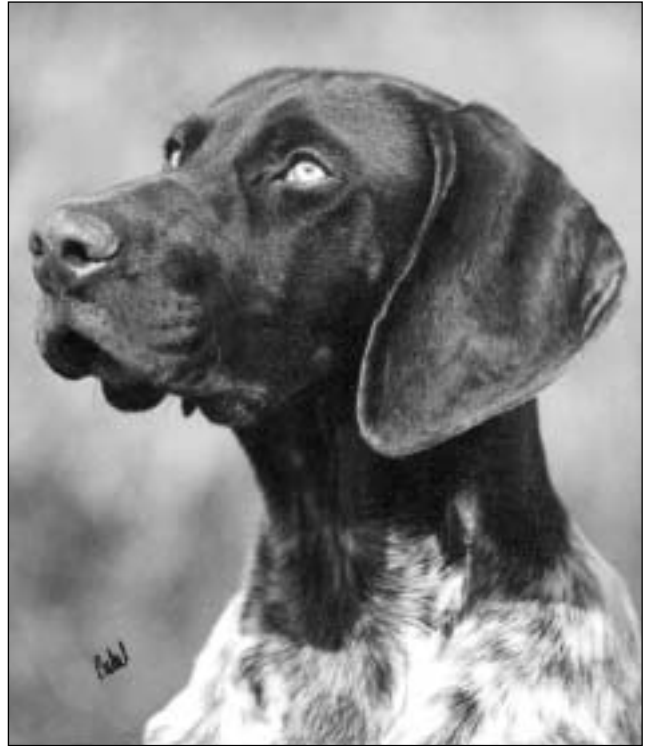


A variety of female heads, all typical and correct.





Adult male. Head tending to blockiness. Eyes too round and light. Good ear size, shape and placement.



This is a young bitch, but even so foreface and underjaw are lacking in strength. Light eyes do not help expression.

Well chiselled below eyes; lack of chiselling gives a coarse, lumpy look to the face.

Large, soft, well -opened nostrils are a most important requirement of this breed – the Shorthair's Pointer inheritance sees him primarily an air scenter, and his skill and ability as a game finder depends heavily on his acute scenting powers. Those, big, open “air-tasters” feed air to the olfactory nerves in the muzzle, another reason for size and strength in foreface. A pinched, snipey nose and muzzle do not have the scenting capabilities to match their correct counterparts, nor the capacity to cleanly carry large game. The GSP head should never give the impression of tapering to a point.

Nose colour, generally brown, is correct except, obviously, in the case of the black coat variant where only black noses are genetically possible. Note the fact that flesh coloured or spotted noses are NOT PERMITTED on dogs with other than white as the base colour. Such colouration is rarely seen here in Australia.

EYES – Of medium size, neither protruding nor deep set. The ideal colour is dark brown. Eye-lids tight fitting.

***FAULTS:** Eyes too light, light yellowish, “bird of prey” eyes.*

***DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:** Excessively loose eyelids; ectropion; entropion; distichiasis [double row of eyelashes].*

The eyes are the “mirror of the soul”. Well, at least in the GSP they should tell us something about the dog within. The Standard says nothing about shape, except in the negative:

“neither protruding nor deep set”. Since protruding eyes are invariably round, we learn that round eyes are OUT, and that almond or oval shaped eyes are correct. Round, bulgey eyes are easily damaged in thick cover, and give a non-typical expression, vacant and starey, rather than “soft and intelligent”.

Also incorrect are slanty eyes, or small, deep-set eyes, both of which give foreign expressions. The GSP should NEVER have a hard expression.

The Standard uses the terms “noble”, “balanced”, “reliable” and “steady temperament”. We have discussed these attributes of temperament and character inherent in a typical Shorthair. Some of these may be difficult to assess in a couple of minutes' judging but the ABSENCE of these characteristics to a large extent shows in the overall demeanour of the dog and in his eyes. Correct soft and intelligent oval shaped eyes usually come on a dog with sought-after attributes – the spooky or hard-nosed specimens show it in their eyes. A Shorthair should have a bright, intelligent, friendly look in its eyes.





Above: Adult male. Head planes O.K. but lacking in underjaw.



Male puppy. Oversize, houndy ears, set too low. Light eyes. Excess dewlap. Weak underjaw.

Left: Adult bitch. Ears are too large.

Anything else should be a cause for concern. Incidentally, the Standard's dictum "eyelids tight fitting" simply means that there should be no looseness or hound-like jaw to catch grass seeds or other foreign matter.

EYE COLOUR is a contentious subject. Some breeders maintain that the rule is "the darker the better", but this is purely personal preference, because the Standard does not say this. Light eyes are OUT, for purely aesthetic reasons, but, as the Standard says: "ideal colour is dark brown". The use of the word "ideal" is significant here: it acknowledges that this is not always or easily attainable. My rule of thumb is "if you *notice* eye colour, it is too light". Bear in mind, that GSP eyes generally keep darkening and may not reach final colour until 5 or 6, so youngsters should not be unduly penalised unless their eyes are really pale. Light honey coloured eyes will darken with age to an acceptable mid-brown, but any tendency towards green/yellow or grey is highly undesirable.

EARS – Moderately long, set on high and broad, flat and without twisting hanging down close to the head, bluntly rounded at the tip. Neither too fleshy nor too thin. When brought forward, they are supposed to reach more or less to the corner of the lips.

FAULTS: *Ears too long, too short, too heavy, set on too closely or twisted.*

Like eyes, ears can also be a barometer of temperament – back when nervous, down when quiet, or up when alert or interested. Oversize, houndy ears are more common than undersize.

Puppy ears sometimes seem out of proportion, but like their feet, they usually grow into them!

Oversize ears destroy the balance of the head. As for the requirement that they be "set on high and wide", this means above eye level and on the side of the skull, as opposed to low-set, or so high they are on top of the head. When quiet or bored (as is often the case at dog shows) GSP ears can tend to hang like dishrags and judgement as to shape, size, placement etc, cannot properly be made without seeing them in alert or semi-alert position. Most Shorthairs are easily alerted by the Judge, but those ears shouldn't be necessarily expected to stay up. In the field, it's different . . .

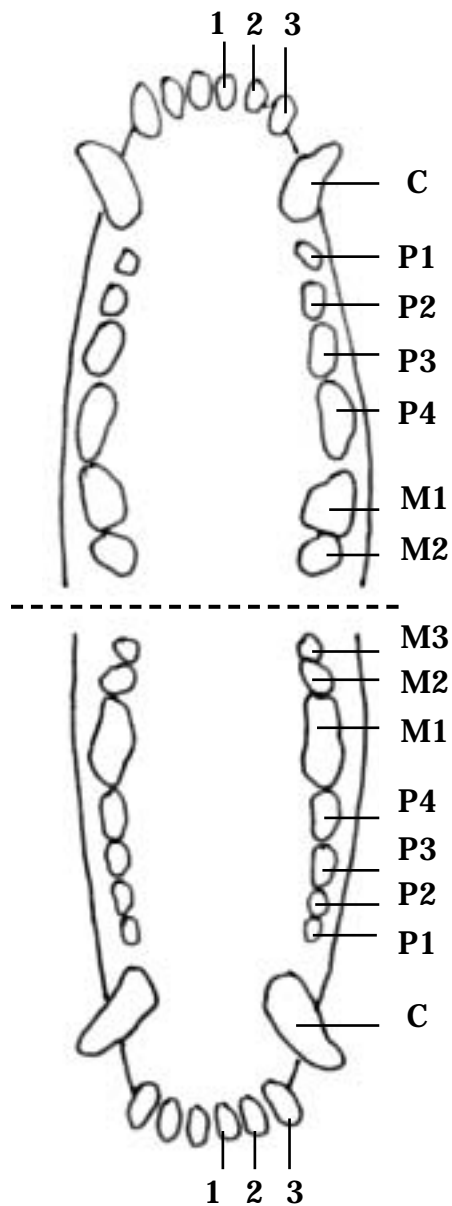


CANINE DENTITION

The total number of teeth in the adult dog is 42, this being made up of 12 incisors, 4 canines, 16 pre-molars and 10 molars.

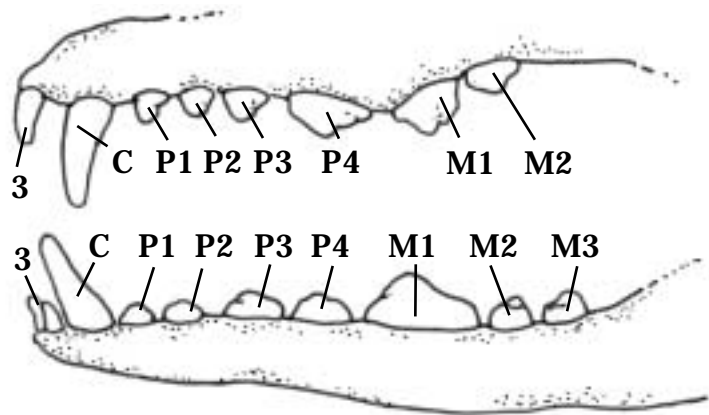
The dental formula for the dog may be expressed in the following terms:

Upper Jaw	Lower Jaw	
6	6	Incisors
2	2	Canines
8	8	Pre-molars
4	6	Molars



The GSP standard is quite specific as to mouth & dentition requirements.

It is no longer acceptable for judges to check the front bite (incisor fit) only.



MOUTH:

TEETH – Strong jaws with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite. The upper incisors should reach over the lower incisors without gap and should be positioned vertically in the jaws. 42 sound teeth, in accordance with the dentition formula.

FAULTS: *From the total of 4 PM1 and 2 M3, only two teeth may be missing.*

SERIOUS FAULTS: *Pincer or partial pincer bite.*

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS: *Missing more than two teeth from the total of 4 P1's and 2 M3's. Missing one or more teeth other than P1's or M3's. Over or undershot; wry mouth, as well as all integrals. Non visible teeth have to be considered as missing except when a Veterinary Surgeon has certified their previous existence. Extra teeth, arranged outside the dental arch. Cleft palate; hare lip.*

Legendary Gundog authority Roy Burnell said of GSP mouths - "Dentition is important in any animal but from judging standpoints, the mouth of a GSP should be considered as pedantically as that of a Terrier".

We now have a Standard that demands that we do so, and this means that, to properly judge our breed, the mouth must be opened and carefully checked for full, correct dentition. Merely examining the fit of incisors is no longer acceptable when judging the GSP.

The Shorthair has, generally speaking, traditionally been fairly free from mouth problems. For instance, from an entry of 174 at the 1993 NSW Specialty, judge Herr Claus Kiefer, President of the Parent Club in Germany, rejected only one dog because of dentition faults. As breeders and custodians of the GSP, we would like to maintain this standard. When judging, please bear in mind both the requirements of the Standard and the practical reasons for them, and heavily penalise bad mouths.

NECK – Length in harmony with general appearance of the dog, progressively thickening towards the body. Very muscular and slightly crested nape. Tight fitting skin of the throat.

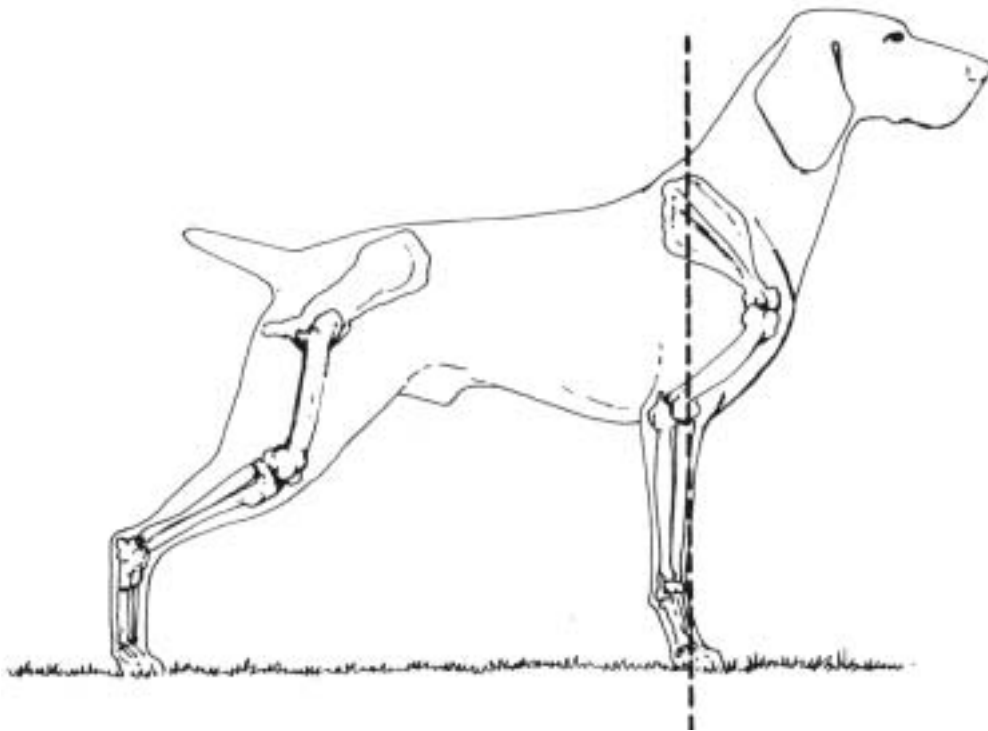
FAULT: *Loose skin at throat.*

Obviously the neck must be muscular to cope with its workload, and the slight arch is a matter of anatomical necessity for the same reason. The neck must, like all other parts, be in balance with the whole dog. Swan necks are not required in the GSP: neither are short, thick, stuffy necks. The dog must be able to cover ground with his nose down, and also easily pick up game on the move. So, his neck should be long enough to allow comfortably for that, and no longer. The skin should fit fairly snugly around the neck, which should, of course, flow smoothly into nicely laid-back shoulders.



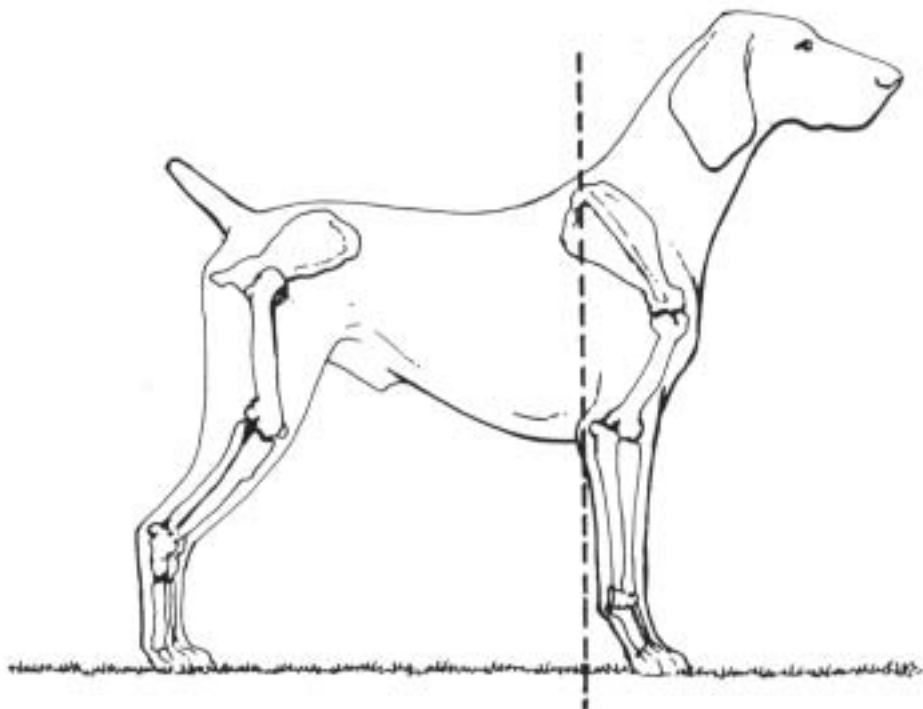
Illustrating how a neck should fit the body.
This bitch also exemplifies correct body proportions.





GOOD ANGULATION

Correct layback of shoulder, long upper arm putting forelegs well under the dog.



POOR ANGULATION

Less shoulder layback, short upper arm.
Note back is same length as above.



FOREQUARTERS:

GENERAL APPEARANCE – Viewed from the front, straight and parallel. Viewed from the side, the legs are well placed under the body.

SHOULDERS – Shoulder blades well laid back, well attached to chest, and strongly muscled.

UPPER ARM – As long as possible, well muscled and dry.

ELBOWS – Close, but not too tight to body, turned neither in nor out, set well back. Good angulation of upper arm and forearm.

FOREARM – Straight, sufficiently muscled. Strong bone, not too coarse.

PASTERN JOINT – Strong.

PASTERNS – Minimal angulation of pastern and forearm, never upright.

FAULTS: Elbows turned in or out; feet turned in or out; forelegs standing close or wide.

SERIOUS FAULTS: Distinctly turned in or out elbows. Weak and down on pasterns; pasterns totally vertical.

The forehand assembly is adequately described in the Standard. Other than the occasional loose elbows, east-west feet and similar fundamental faults found in any breed, the two most common problems in the GSP are the lack of length in upper arm and straightness of pasterns, with elbows almost directly below the point of the shoulder. This is not only spoils the outline, it shows itself most conspicuously in the short “diddle-diddle” choppy movement prevalent in the breed today. It also manifests itself in the “stair-climbing” effort – wasting forehand movement commonly seen. This, in a breed meant to cover ground effortlessly, hours at a time!

Look for long upper arm (as near as possible same length as scapula), with the elbow well laid back under the body. It will always be associated with a well developed and obvious prosternum and a correct, slightly sloping pastern. An easy rule of thumb guide to correct length and lay back of upper arm is that a line dropped vertically from the point of the withers, should run down the front of the foreleg and through the foot. Shortness in upper arm will bring this vertical line down behind the foreleg and foot affecting the balance of the dog which is partially compensated for by the pastern becoming too steep.



An example of excellence in forequarter construction.

Also illustrates correct proportions – length of body slightly exceeds height at withers. Measure it for yourself!





A beautiful example of the female of the species. This is a top-winning bitch of the 1970's in U.K.



Too wide, out at elbow, east-west feet, legs lacking bone.



Needs more infill (prosternum).



An example of exaggerated prosternum.



The correct pastern has enough strength and resilience to absorb impact energy all day; the straight pastern is mechanically unable to cope with the stress put on it continuously and causes lameness after too much hard work; The straight pastern can often be seen in the showing actually knuckling over, clearly pointing to a fundamental weakness in forehand construction.

BODY:

TOPLINE – Straight and slightly sloping.

WITHERS – Well defined.

BACK – Firm and muscular. Vertebral processes should be covered by muscles.

LOIN – Short, broad, muscular, straight or slightly arched. Transition from back to loin tight and well knit.

CROUP – Broad and long enough, not abruptly slanting [steep], but slightly slanting [sloping] towards the tail ; well muscled.

CHEST – Somewhat deeper than broad, with well defined forechest, with the sternum reaching back as far as possible. Sternum and elbow joint on the same level. Ribs well sprung, neither flat nor barrel shaped. False ribs reaching well down.

UNDERLINE – With elegant arch, slightly tucked up towards the rear, dry.

FAULTS: *Slight roach back. Croup too short. Chest too deep.*

SERIOUS FAULTS: *Distinct roach back; slightly sway back. Considerable lack of depth of chest; poorly developed forechest. Ribs too flat or barrel shaped.*

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS: *Excessive sway back; malformation of the spine. Any malformation of the chest; e.g. "clipped sternum" [short sternum blending abruptly into the abdominal line].*



Good hindquarter and forequarter, but exaggerated depth of brisket and short ribcage with corresponding excess tuck-up and length of coupling.





Sadly lacking both angulation and second thigh, showing weakness in hock joint.



Correctly made hindquarter – excellent topline, tailset, angulation and second thigh development, strong hocks and short rear pasterns.



“Viewed from behind straight and parallel”. An excellent example of the Standard's requirement in this regard.



Powerful, well-developed upper and lower thigh, but clearly over-angled.



An example of a low set tail, producing a classic 'goose-rump'. Also very straight in stifle.



The Standard gives a pretty clear picture of what is required: deep, oval ribbing of chest giving sufficient width in front. The Shorthair should never be too wide or coarse in chest. Whilst the GSP should never be as pronounced as the Weimaraner in this regard, there should be a good prosternum. In profile, you should be able to see prosternum (forechest) in front of the point of shoulder. If the point of shoulder is the foremost part of body, then the forechest, and therefore lung/heart capacity, are lacking.

Steeple fronts are sometimes seen in this breed, and should be heavily penalised. Chest should drop to elbows, right from babyhood. Depth of chest is born, not developed, as may be the case in other breeds.

Deep ribs should be carried well back ("false ribs reaching well down"). The GSP is an almost square dog, with a short back. This does not mean short ribcage! Shortness of "back" should come from shortness of coupling, not of ribcage.

"Loin: Short, broad, muscular, straight or slightly arched". We have discussed the importance of shortness (i.e. between pelvis and ribcage) and musculature in this area. The terms "broad" and "straight or slightly arched" mean transversely (i.e. across the body from side to side) not longitudinally as many people wrongly suppose.

Note how often this part of the Standard emphasises muscular development. A strong back is particularly important for rapid movement, flexibility and endurance. Therefore, it should not be too long, and the loins should be broad and elastic as well as straight to slightly arched. The spinal process of the dorsal vertebrae should be well covered by muscles. The croup should be broad and sufficiently long, not steep, starting at the height of the level back and only slightly sloping towards the tail. There should be a slight tuck-up in order to provide adequate room while galloping, without giving the impression of being "herring-gutted". Both "tubular" and "whippety" underlines are wrong for this breed.

A correctly backed GSP in movement showing good reach and drive, will place his hind foot near enough in the spot vacated by his front foot. If he is too short in back or coupling, he will "over-reach" or "side-wind". Excess length in the coupling may allow more reach, but at the expense of strength, flexibility and endurance.

As with most breeds it is a simple physiological fact of life that bitches will tend to be a little longer in coupling than dogs. Although the vast majority of Breed Standards make no mention of this, Nature seems to insist that room be available in breeds like the GSP to carry 10 or more good-sized pups. Experienced judges and breeders understand and make allowance for this, whilst agreeing that it in no way means that bitches should have long backs.

TOPLINE: The Standard indirectly describes the correct topline: "smooth outline"; "straight and slightly sloping", "withers clearly defined" are mentioned in the Standard proper, with faults listed as "sway back", and "roach back"... the ideal topline is firm, smooth and level from withers to croup. It remains firm on the move, with no bouncing up and down or sagging. Dippy or roach backs are wrong, as are ski-slopes (so beloved in USA and by some exhibitors here) or the opposite, high rump. Attempts may be made to mask a dippy back by over-stretching the hind legs, or to lower a high rump by setting the hind legs well apart. These tricks work to some extent on the stack, but all is revealed as soon as the dog moves.

PLEASE NOTE – The slight but definite "nick" in the topline immediately behind the withers (marking the change of direction of the spinous processes of the vertebrae) is quite normal and correct.

The straight back slopes slightly over the croup to the set-on of tail. *The tail should never come straight off the back like some hound or terrier breeds.*

HINDQUARTERS:

GENERAL– Viewed from behind, straight and parallel. Good angulations in stifles and hocks, strong bone.

UPPER THIGH – Long, broad and muscular. Good angulation between pelvis and upper thigh.

STIFLE – Strong, with good angulation of upper and lower thigh.

LOWER THIGH – Long, muscular with clearly visible tendons. Good angulation between lower thigh and hocks.

HOCK JOINT – Strong.

HOCKS – (Rear pasterns) Strong, vertical.





If it's not there at six weeks of age, it won't ever be there. These photographs show a good front, rear and forehand assembly. Note long, laid back upper arm, forechest with plenty of depth. GSP's do not "develop" depth of chest with maturity. They are born with it, and if not, it doesn't ever come.



Most GSP puppies do eventually grow into their ears. These two did!



A nicely made youngster – well proportioned, good neck and shoulders, correctly angulated fore and aft. Note second thigh.



Why the GSP has differing chest measurement immediately behind the elbows. This 6 week old puppy was photographed on staunch point – style that gained her Field Trial Championship in a short time.



FAULTS: Steep hindquarters. Hindquarters too straight, slightly bow legged, slightly cow hocked or close hocks.

SERIOUS FAULTS: Distinctly cow hocked or bow legged, in stance as well as in movement. Overbuilt hindquarters.

DISQUALIFYING FAULT: Dewclaws (with or without bony skeleton).

The hips should be broad with hip sockets wide apart and a gentle fall to the tail. The upper thigh should be broad with plenty of hard muscle, correctly angulated at the stifle. A most important requirement of the hindquarter is the good muscular development of the second (lower) thigh, which is necessary for agility and endurance. Look for, and reward, strong, well-developed second thighs – they are a most important attribute in a working gundog!

Bow hocks are rarely seen, cow hocks are unfortunately quite common. Not only are cow hocks most unattractive, they constitute a serious mechanical weakness in a functional working breed such as this and should be heavily penalised.

As to the disqualification clause relating to (rear) dewclaws, in over thirty years and over sixty plus litters, we have never bred one, nor have I ever seen one. We routinely remove front dewclaws at tail-docking time.

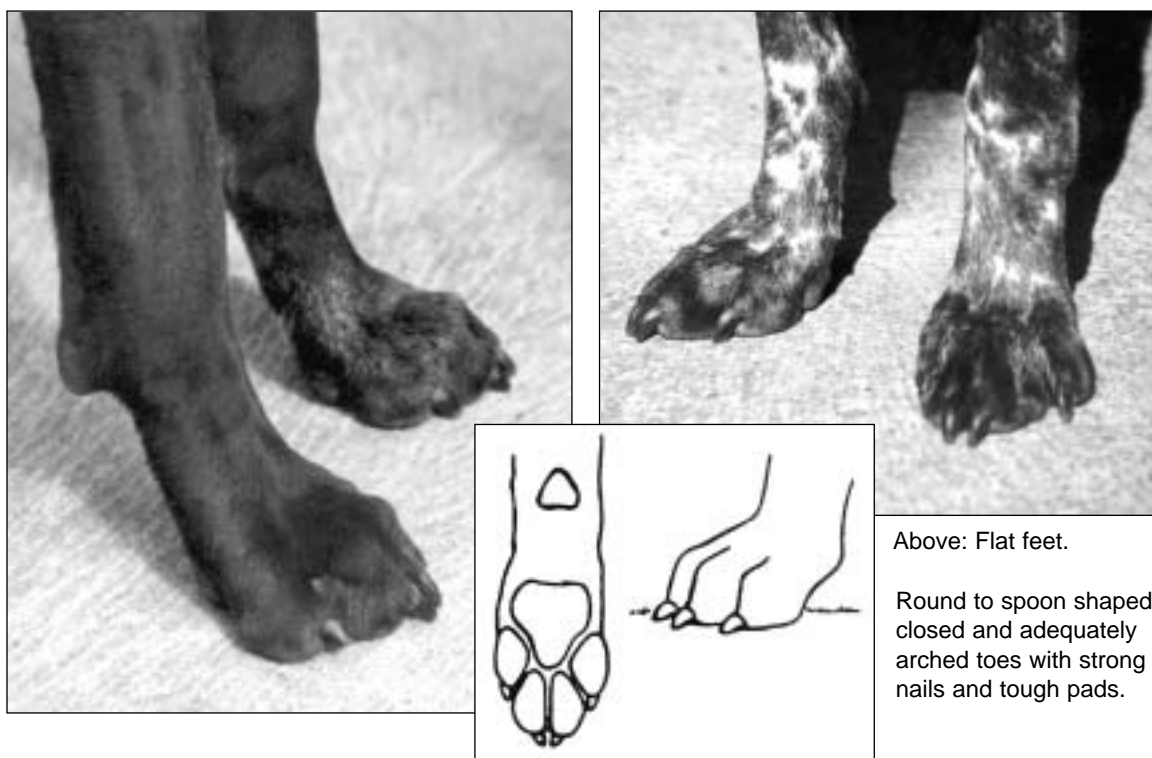
ANGULATION: As an unexaggerated dog, the GSP requires good but not excessive angulation fore and aft, with the most important thing being **BALANCE** between both ends. The all-too-often-seen straight front followed by an over-angulated rear end, being unbalanced, both looks wrong and works badly. In fact, a dog with less-than-desirable angulation both ends will usually outmove one with unmatched angulation. Judges should not get carried away with a greatly angulated hindquarter – it is much more likely to be wrong than right in this breed, and produces the untypical exaggerated ski-slope topline. It could also be caused by the dog sagging or partially crouching, both easy to identify by having the dog move. The GSP does not have the hind angulation of the Weimaraner!

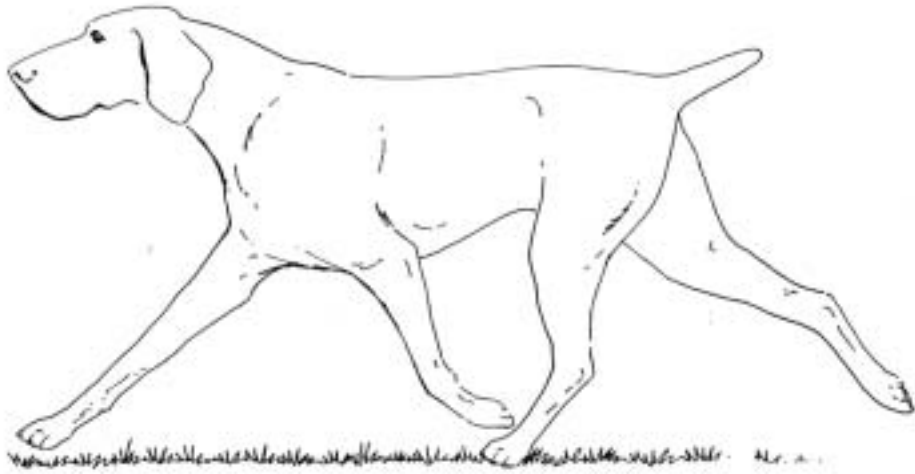
FEET:

FRONT AND REAR – Round to spoon shaped, with well closed and adequately arched toes. Strong nails. Tough, resistant pads. Feet set parallel, turning neither in nor out in stance or in movement.

FAULT: Feet turned in or out.

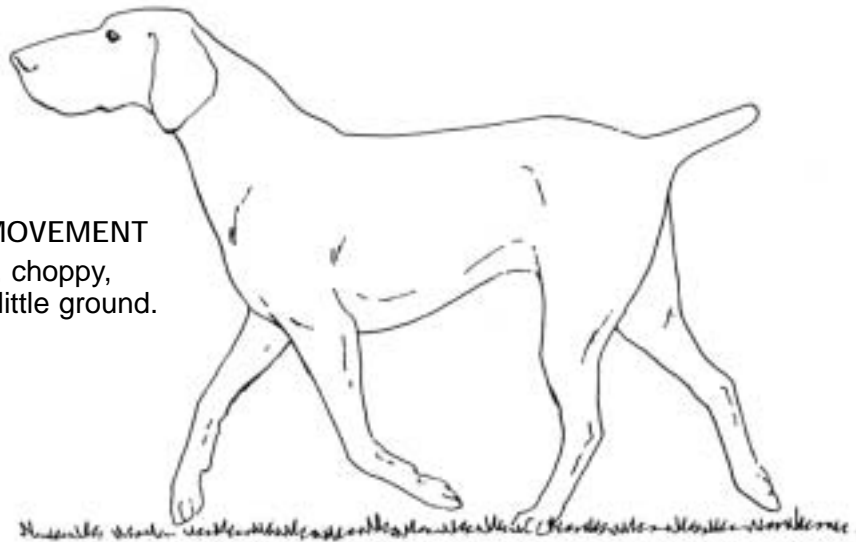
SERIOUS FAULTS: Flat feet; spread toes.





GOOD MOVEMENT

Reach, drive, balance, plenty of ground coverage.
Front foot hits the ground directly under the nose.



POOR MOVEMENT

Short, choppy,
covering little ground.



Many judges seem to take feet for granted without looking hard or handling them at all. In a breed such as the Shorthair, this is unforgivable, because without four correct feet in good condition, the rest of the dog is quite useless!

The Standard again is succinct - basically, anything from round to oval is what is required. The main thing, though, is the quality. Tight, close knit, well arched toes, with thick, heavy pads and strong, short nails make for a good foot. There should be plenty of hair between the pads. Flat, open, splay-toed feet would last about five minutes in wheat stubble or any kind of rough ground, and should be heavily penalised in this breed.

TAIL – Set high; strong at the root and then tapering; of medium length. Preferably docked about halfway for hunting purposes. At rest hanging down, in movement horizontal, and carried neither too above the backline nor markedly bent.

(In countries where tail docking is prohibited by law, the tail can be left natural. It should reach down as far as the hocks and be carried straight or slightly sabre fashion).

FAULT: *Tail strongly bent or carried too high above the topline.*

The Standard is quite clear on this rear-end appendage. GSP tails are not docked for purely cosmetic reasons, but rather to avoid the hard-to-heal damage that can arise from a madly-thrashing tail in close cover, kennels, etc.

Please bear in mind the wording about carriage – down when quiet, horizontal when moving, NEVER held high over the back or bent. This surely also rules out some handlers' habit of using the tail as a high-pushed lever to help the dog to stand up! The most usual position for a correctly made, confident GSP's tail on the move is "out and up", neither drooping down nor gaily pointing to the sky.

The opposite problem is often seen - the low-set tail. This is not only quite unattractive, it is indicative of incorrect pelvic construction. The GSP tail does not come "straight off the back." The croup falls slightly away to the set-on of tail. When set too high, it will tend to be carried incorrectly, i.e. "carried strongly bent" or carried too high above the topline. When set low, the tendency to goose rump will be obvious.

The set-on and carriage of the tail may be a relatively minor part of the picture, but it contributes so much to it – an upright, overly gay tail spoils the outline as much as a tail held down.

As to length, only the breeder knows how much was removed and how much was left. The important thing is – does it look right; does it balance the dog? If it's too long or too short, it will LOOK wrong.

GAIT/MOVEMENT – Well extended strides with forceful propulsion from the hindquarters and corresponding reach of the forelimbs. Front and hind legs moving straight and parallel. The dog carries himself proudly. Pacing is undesirable.

SERIOUS FAULT: *Ponderous movement; clumsy gait.*

What we are looking for is fluid, balanced, effortless, ground covering movement without either the wide, straddling "wishbone" hindquarter action or anything approaching the close, hock-brushing action so often seen.

Neither does the "far-reaching, harmonious strides" mentioned under General Appearance suggest that belting around the ring flat out (so fashionable with many breeds these days, and so wrong) is what is desired.

IT IS NOT! "Proud attitude" means the dog is showing confidence and strength, both physical and mental, and not plodding, slinking or slumping around the ring. It does NOT imply that it should scoot around the ring with its head way up there like a show pony, with its front legs beating time!

A correctly made, balanced Shorthair will cover the ground easily with its head and neck "out and up", and its front feet gathering in the ground right out there under its nose. Its hind feet will land just about where its front ones did. And because the back is strong, loin short and well knit and ligamentations firm, the topline will remain level.





Above and opposite: These two photos of GSP's at work show variations in pointing style. Note correct tail carriage on both.



Choppy, busy movement should not be confused with correct movement. The best ground-coverers I have seen have almost given the appearance of “laziness”, so easy and effortless is their movement.

Whilst not considered “daisy cutting” action, the front feet should not be lifted high, but rather reach straight forward and low. Feet should hit the ground directly under the nose, not the body.

There should be no looseness of elbows or hocks on the move, or flipping of forefeet.

There will, of course, be some tendency to convergence as speed increases but this should never reach the “single tracking” stage.

Correct head carriage in movement is “out and up”, with head well forward. Flashy movement with high-held head is incorrect and untypical.

I have always believed that good side gait, i.e. ground covering ability, is far more important in a Gundog than the ability to do a tidy “out and back”. Many Judges seem to place undue emphasis on the latter aspect of movement. My experience is that the neatest “out and back” movers are frequently the straight in shoulder, short-moving dogs that cover the least ground in side gait.

When assessing or comparing Shorthair gait, try to keep in mind the purpose of the breed, and ask “could this dog cover ground tirelessly for hours without falling over? Could it go up and down a high, steep river bank time and again retrieving large ducks?” These factors have little or no bearing on who gets round the ring the quickest, but with the least effort.

COAT – Skin – Tight fitting, without wrinkles.

Hair – Short and dense, coarse and hard to the touch. Somewhat thinner and shorter on the head and ears, not noticeably longer on the underside of the tail. It should cover the whole body.

FAULT: *Loose skin at throat.*

The skin should be tight but resilient, without any excess or wrinkles. The coat is short and dense and should be tough and fairly harsh to the touch. There should be no undercoat. At the ears and head it is shorter and thinner; on the undersides of the tail it should not be noticeably longer. Occasionally, particularly in solid livers, you will find a thin, very short coat, where skin can be seen by looking into the coat from behind. GSP coats should be sufficiently dense and close-lying, to preclude the possibility of skin showing anywhere over the top and side of the body. This is of course to provide the maximum protection from cuts, scratches etc. Sleekness or softness are undesirable. The coat should always be coarse and hard, but not dry. The best coats (in terms of coarseness and density) usually come on liver/white, the tendency to softness more often on livers. You will usually find, however, that irrespective of coat colour or pattern, good specimens also have quite acceptable jackets.

Remember the “taut, gleaming coat” in General Appearance!



COLOUR:

- Solid liver without markings.
- Liver with small white or flecked markings on chest and legs.
- Dark liver roan, with liver head, liver patches or specks. The basic colour of such a dog is not liver mixed with white, or white with liver, but the coat is such an even, intensive mixture of liver and white that it results in that kind of inconspicuous appearance [camouflage] of the dog which is so valuable in practical hunting. On the inner sides of the hind lighter.
- Light liver roan with liver head, liver patches, specks, or without patches. In this colouring there are fewer liver hairs, the white hairs predominate.
- Black colour in the same nuances [shades] as the liver, or the liver roan colours. Yellow tan markings are permitted.
- Blaze, snip with speckled flews are permissible.

As to colouration, this breed has the advantage of great variety within complete and equal acceptability. From solid liver through all variations to predominantly white, no colouration or pattern should be given preference in the showing. The plainly marked, "ordinary" looking, GSP might not be particularly eye catching but may well be better constructed than its more flashily marked competition. If so, it should be the winner. The same applies to Group and Show level. You may need to look beyond the surface glamour, or lack of it!

Simply put, no combination of liver or liver and white is unacceptable on the body of a GSP. Of course, "black" may be substituted for "liver" in all of the above. As for "liver": it is simply a good, rich brown. Most breeders aim for a deep, "Club chocolate" colour; and on either solids or liver/whites, this is the most attractive. However, if the dog is in good coat and condition this is more important than the depth of colour.



HEADS: There is a certain amount of contention within the breed as to head colour in liver/whites. I simply observe that the Standard clearly states in the 3rd and 4th variants, which are by far the most common liver/white combinations... **"WITH LIVER HEAD"**,... and if that is not an unambiguous specification of what is wanted then why was it put there? The "escape clause" at the very end of this part of the Standard says "Blaze, snip with speckled flews are permissible" but since when did "permissible" equate with a clearly defined preference? Further, I do not believe that a blaze, snip, or speckled flews in any way suggest large areas of white on the head. The Standard clearly wants a Liver or basically Liver headpiece. The Standard of years back, and other countries' Standards may be different, but since May 1996 we have been operating under the above.

This is not to say that "broken" heads are unacceptable, merely to point out what the Standard specifies. Judges will have to determine their own attitude to this aspect of the Standard.

The reference to yellow markings in the "Black" clause is a great worry. The only construction I can put on this sentence is "Black and tan" or "tricolour" which have always been sure signs of mongrelisation and totally unacceptable. My information is that this clause was added by the Germans to give respectability to the infusion of other breeds (e.g. Dobermann and Rottweiler) in years gone by to improve their black pigmentation and eye colour. We have not seen this colour scheme here and I trust we won't.

To sum up on colour - I hark back to my opening sentence... "a practical, functional working gundog without exaggeration or concession to cosmetic appeal".

SIZE - Height at the withers: Dogs 62 - 66 cm (24.5 - 26 ins)
Bitches 58 - 63 cm (23 - 25 ins)

SERIOUS FAULT: Deviation of more than 2cm (1 in) from the given height at the withers.

As in the majority of breeds, bigger is not necessarily better. The main thing to bear in mind is that the GSP should not be a LARGE dog, should not be a noticeably TALL dog, should not be a COARSE dog; neither should it be a SMALL dog, or FINE dog. It should be of GOOD MEDIUM SIZE, with strength and substance - combined with elegance - truly "A dog of noble and harmonious appearance".

Quality - that almost indefinable ingredient which shines clearly from the dogs which possess it should, I feel, take precedence over measurements.



A WORD ABOUT FAULTS: As you can see, the Standard ranks faults in the GSP in accordance with the importance placed on them. As judges, it behoves us to take this into account, allowing for our own interpretation as to the degree of the problem. Many people take issue with the FCI Standards' practice of listing faults, claiming that it encourages "fault judging". I disagree. It is simply the means the Standards' architects use to draw careful attention to what they consider the potential problem areas in the breeds, and emphasising the importance of avoiding them.

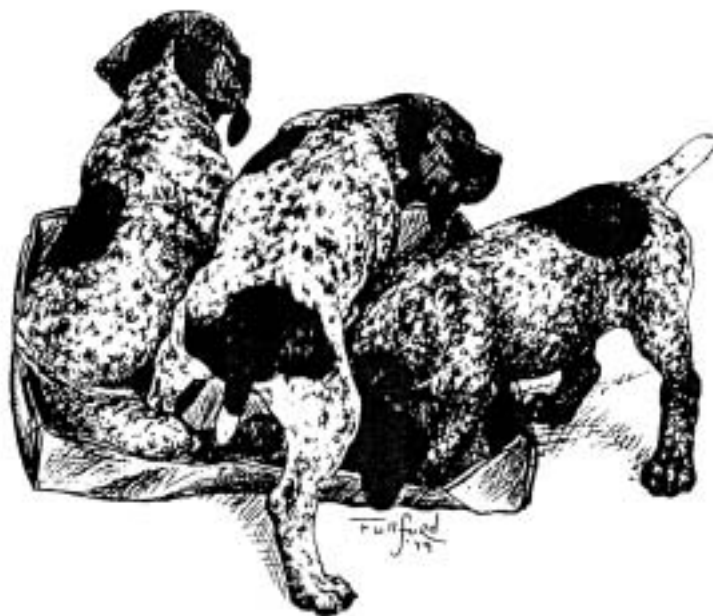
Good dog judging is about looking for and rewarding the good things. About recognising quality, whilst being aware of and understanding the aspects of each breed that are both desirable and undesirable.

Disqualifying Faults do not necessarily mean the dog must be sent from the ring!

They simply preclude the dog from receiving a placing or award.

A FINAL THOUGHT: I began this discussion with the statement that the GSP is a natural breed. A correctly made, properly balanced Shorthair should be able to be posed in a natural show stance with little or no effort or artificial interference.

A very quick insight into the conformation of a GSP can be gained just by watching the performance of its handler – the more pushing, pulling, placing, poking and positioning of each piece, the more problems with the dog, nine times out of ten!



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