

Judging the German Wirehaired Pointer
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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 a "variety". In fact, coat, which is heavily emphasized in our standard, is (#1) one of the most inconsistent characteristics of the breed and (#2) perhaps the most misunderstood. Our standard itself, just like many other breed standards, doesn't always present a crystal clear picture of its intent. For example, even the simple statement that the GWP is a "medium sized dog" could be argued by someone comparing a Cocker Spaniel, an English Springer Spaniel and a German Wirehaired Pointer.

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? The Wirehair is first and foremost a versatile sporting dog and you should be able to envision the dog in front of you working in the field. Versatility, in this breed, refers to a dog that hunts both fur and feather, can adapt its way of going to varied terrains, can find and point game and can retrieve both on land and in water. As you put your hands on the dog to evaluate him, keep in mind that this dog should be sound and functional. "Function" is the key to all aspects of the standard. For example, if you have a dog with 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 and cold water with a bad coat. Prioritize to some degree by function.

Head: From the side, the head should give a rectangular appearance. Facial furnishing (beard and eyebrows) should be present, but not overdone. Eyebrows are never scissored. GWP's shouldn't be trimmed to look like terriers or Giant Schnauzers. Don't necessarily penalize a dog for sparse facial furnishings. Very often excellent coated dogs do not have abundant furnishings. Remember that coat on the dog's skull should be naturally short and close fitting. The bite is scissors; the eyes and nose are brown. Eyerims should be close fitting to keep out irritating seeds, grasses and other debris. Unlike what may be permissible in a GSP or a Pointer, the head is liver (a blaze is acceptable) and the ears are liver. A good head is certainly desirable; in fact, when choosing a puppy, it's something I particularly look for because it looks up at me so often! But as far as function is concerned, as long as the bite is correct and dentition is adequate and the under jaw is sufficiently deep to carry game, a good head is icing on the cake.



Neck and Body: The neck should be slightly arched and 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 (the breast bone) to ischium (the buttocks) is slightly longer than from withers to ground. 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 tuck-up is apparent. 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. 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.

Forequarters and Hindquarters: Shoulders should be well laid back with hindquarter angulation balancing the front. Although balance and symmetry are important to overall appearance and movement, this doesn't mean that a dog that is straight in both front and rear is correct. Feet are round to slightly oval in outline, high arched with toes close and pads thick and hard. A tight foot with good depth of pad protects the dog from stones, sand spurs, burrs, thorns and other sundry hazards on the ground.

Coat: The coat must be functional. The standard states that a dog must have correct coat to be of correct type. Unfortunately, coats are varied. Even more unfortunate, from a judging perspective, is that a coat can be manufactured. For example, a coat that is too long or too profuse but that has good texture, can be trimmed to present a



flat-lying, correct coat. Even a relatively soft coat can be worked over time to present an adequately correct texture. I think when judging, if wire-coated dogs are not familiar to you, keep in mind that the nature of the desired coat should require a minimal amount of care. It is a double coat that is coarse, wiry and protective, weather resistant and to some extent, water-repellant. In reality, the desired coat does not require extensive stripping, scissoring, clipping or chalking to enhance texture or appearance. Obviously the topcoat should have a coarse texture and undercoat should be present.

Color: The standard says that the coat is liver and white. It then describes patterns (ticking and roaning) and states that “Any black in the coat is to be severely penalized.” As the standard has already stated that “the coat is liver and white”, this refers to *any black in a liver and white dog*. Nowhere in the standard does it state that a black and white dog is acceptable but should be severely penalized, nor does it disqualify black and white. The standard, however, does call for a liver head, liver ears and a brown nose. Judges have pointed and finished black and white dogs. If our standard calls for a liver and white dog and a judge puts up a black and white dog, then do you think that same judge would put up a russet colored Weimaraner? The Weimaraner standard calls for a grey dog but there is no disqualification for a russet colored dog. I don’t think any judge would point or finish a Weimaraner that was any color than that called for in the standard. If in doubt about the color of the dog, remember that a liver and white dog will have a liver nose and a black and white dog will have a black nose.

Gait: Movement is the proof of the pudding. Gait should be fluid without wasted motion. Good reach and good driving power are imperative. Correct foot fall and timing contribute to a dogs’ ability to cover ground without tiring. Topline should remain firm.

Size: Dogs are 24-26 inches, bitches slightly less but not under 22 inches. The concern with size should pertain to how it affects the working ability of the animal. The benchmark is a dog that can endure in the field.

Temperament: A GWP may be aloof to strangers. 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 GWP’s registered, we have a very large number of Dual Champions and dual titled dogs. 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.