

History of the German Shorthaired Pointer
GSPCA JE Presentation – AKC Webinar May 18, 2021
By Maxine Moinier, JEC

The history of the German Shorthaired Pointer starts in the 14th and 15th century when dogs were used for hunting with nets on feathered game, especially in the Mediterranean countries, and in combination with falconry. Pointers came to the German courts via France, Spain and Flanders (Belgium) where the most important distinctive feature of these dogs was their pointing performance. After the first double-barreled shot gun was made (1750), a pointing dog was even more desired where, in full sight of the dog, "game birds in flight" were shot. That was the beginning of the transition from a mere pointer to a versatile gundog.

Changes throughout Continental Europe along with the break-up of the aristocratic estates, German breeders set about to develop a "utility dog". One responding to any kind of work in the field, woods and water; having inherent attributes of pointing, retrieving and tracking and could be used for any type of game; large, small, fur or feather. Also, it was to stand its ground in face of a predator or poacher but also be a part of the family, not a kennel dog.

In the late 1800's it was Prince Albrecht zu Solms Braunfels who began development of the Shorthair as a breed, "through efficiency to type" adage that became the guiding principal for the breeders of the day. Using the existing German pointers and three established purebred Schweisshund breeds the "Shorthair" as it came to be known was within a few short years breeding true to type. One of Prince Albrecht zu Solms Braunfels' early experiments produced Feldman I, a rather grotesque dog in appearance but started the process of developing a dog of function, and gradually moved towards appearance. A breed Standard was approved in 1879. The breed was on its way, acknowledged by Dr. Paul Kleeman, an early enthusiast inspired by Prince Solms. Dr. Kleeman was instrumental in the future progress of breed. The Klub Kurzhaar was formed in 1890. The first Kurzhaar Studbook was established in 1897.

In 1907 German breeders Christian Bode (Altenauer) and Dr. Wachter (Wach) imported Beechgrove Bess a solid black Arkwright pointer bitch. The Arkwright pointer was chosen for its inherent pointing and backing attributes and purity of bloodlines attributed to not having been out crossed as was the practice of the other English pointer breeders of the day. The purpose of this outcross was to improve the light eye and faded coat color occurring at the time with each subsequent generation that was then bred back to the existing Shorthair stock. With this GSP Arkwright pointer breeding the first black and black and white Shorthairs were produced and by 1924 were registered in the Studbook with the designation Pr.K. "Prussian Kurzhaar". This designation was used because the dog's coat color was the same as the Prussian flag, black and white. By 1933 the designation was no longer used and they were all simply referred to as Shorthairs.

The Shorthair was exported to other countries and came to the U.S. with immigrant families in the 1890's. Though, two world wars took a toll on the breeding stock, Dr. Charles Thornton of Missoula, Montana is credited with the first documented import and a litter whelped in the U.S. in 1925. Dr. Thornton insisted the breed should be recognized as the German Shorthaired Pointer-Retriever but the AKC stated it had to be either a Pointer or a Retriever so Retriever was dropped.

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In 1930 the AKC officially recognized the breed with Greif v.d. Fliegerahalde, #723,642 the first Shorthair registered in the AKC Studbook. Jack Shattuck of Minnesota brought recognition to the Breed by campaigning his dog Fritz v. Schwarenberg across the U.S. and winning BOB at Morris & Essex and Westminster in 1940 and the Chicago International 4 years in a row. Fritz also sired the first A.K.C. field and dual champion for the breed. The Parent Club (GSPCA) was formed in 1938 and the first standard approved in May 1946 was based on the 1902 German Standard that only mentioned the brown color.