

Where the “type” comes from...

The AKC breed standard describes the traits or characteristics, aka “type”, of the desired German Shorthaired Pointer. Correct type is what separates the Shorthair from other Continental gun dogs breeds and the English Pointer.

To understand Shorthair type one has to know the purpose for which the breed was developed and the expectations of the Breeders at the time to have a “utility” dog. This breed was expected to perform multiple tasks, sometimes within a single day. Find game, both fur and feather, hold large animals at bay. Point, land or water retrieve, track and locate wounded game, stand its ground if faced by large predatory game or dispatch with smaller ones upon command. Hence **“...a versatile hunter, an all purpose gun dog capable of high performance in field and water.”** The Shorthair was to work independently for long hours and not be a pack or kennel dog, rather to live in the home as part of the family.

To meet these needs, the Shorthair must be an athlete with a taut coat, in good muscle condition with endurance to cover open fields, work in wooded areas or thick upland cover, marshland or in the water. Hence medium size, **“with a short back, but standing over plenty of ground.”** Also the medium sized dog fit easily into the modest home environment, yet with enough size and substance when standing its ground in face of a poacher or predator.

The Shorthair was to have a distinctive look keeping with its German heritage and not look like an English pointer. The differences were not limited to the head shape but all parts found there, the medium sized almond shaped eye, ear placement, shape and length. The prominent nose, the gradual rise to the forehead, stop affect created by the eyebrow placement, reasonably broad skull, arched sides and muzzle length in right proportion to depth indicate proper configuration necessary to carry game 10 pounds plus or minus. The scissor bite, with molars intermeshing properly, assures a good grip with crippled game and dealing with a predator.

The side profile beginning with the neck into shoulders, depth of chest, tuck up, tail set and placement of the fore and rear quarters indicate a dog mechanically optimal to perform the multiple tasks for which it was developed. **“Grace of outline, clean-cut head, sloping shoulders, deep chest, powerful back, strong quarters, good bone composition, adequate muscle, well carried tail and taut coat produce a look of nobility and indicate a heritage of purposefully conducted breeding.”** The neck is not long and elegant nor short and rising directly from the shoulders. It is of proper length to pick up game, muscular at the nape and as it flows downward becomes gradually larger as it blends smoothly into the shoulders. Chest depth not width with slight rib spring provides adequate space for heart/lung function yet allows the dog to move with ease through heavy cover or water. The short back allows optimal energy transfer while gaiting thus allowing the dog to work longer without tiring. The shoulder blade lay back, long upper arm and elbow placement provide efficient forward extension, good shock absorption and balance as the weight is being transferred forward.

The underline and top line of the dog are not parallel due to the slight slope of the top line from the withers down toward the tail and the depth of chest as the underline gradually rises up into the tuck up. This allows the rear leg to complete its recovery motion, the dog to single track and to keep the body stable as energy is transferred forward from the rear drive. The rear quarter configuration and tail placement are instrumental for forward drive energy, balance and rudder action for the Shorthair to work efficiently in the water as well as on land. Not uniform in size or length, the natural tail is docked leaving 40% which functions well for balance and as a rudder without sustaining injury while working in heavy cover.

Compact feet, round to spoon-shaped with sufficiently arched and heavily nailed toes with strong hard and thick pads allow the dog to work long hours including uneven and rough terrain. The coat designed for protection and efficiency of care defines the breed, German Shorthair as opposed to long or wire haired coats. It should be short, thick and feel tough to the hand although the hair found on the head and ears will be softer, thinner and shorter than the body coat which should never feel soft or silky to the hand.

Movement should be smooth, clean and effortless. ***“Further evidence...movement which is balanced, alertly coordinated and without wasted motion.”*** With the front, one should not see flipping feet, hackney or foreleg lift at the elbow. The rear feet should not move wide or kick up behind the dog. There should be no appearance of a bicycling motion with the point of the hock lifting rather than flexing the foot forward as the stifle bends bringing the leg forward. The top line should remain smooth with no up and down or rolling motion across the loin area.

Early German breeders preferred dark roan and solid liver dogs because they blended with the surroundings, while in the U.S. hunters seem to prefer dogs with more white and fewer markings because they were easier to see in the field. It is important to remember there is no preferred coat pattern or head marking in the Breed's Standard.

One thing all agreed upon, the dog must be biddable in the field and good in the home. Germany's national gun dog was to be ***“aristocratic, well balanced, symmetrical animal with conformation indicating power, endurance and agility and a look of intelligence and animation.”***