

The Black GSP-History and Origin

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The Black GSP - Origin and History

Herr Christian Bode of Altenauer Kennels along with his friend Dr. Wachter of Wach Kennels in Berlin is credited with the out cross to the black Arkwright pointer. It was the desire of the German breeders at the time to improve the eye and coat pigment of their dogs because it was progressively getting lighter. The solid black Arkwright pointer was chosen because its pointing and backing qualities were superior to the pied breed Pointer of the time that had been crossed with non-pointing breeds, i.e. the Foxhound. Herr Bode died in 1935 and a rough translation of his memorial in the 1935 Zuchtbuch states that he learned the trade of a buyer in 1861, a business that subsequently took him to England. It was during this time frame while there he became "familiar with the English managing breed and respect for the English pointer that remained long after." Beechgrove Bess, a seventh generation Arkwright pointer bitch was imported in 1907 to Germany by Herr Bode as a result of these travels to England.

To understand the breed development of the German dogs at the time it helps to understand The German Dog Stud-book, Deutsch Hundestammbuch (D.H.St.B). It was set up like the British Kennel Club Studbook and included all breeds. There was concern at the time that the D.H.St.B. couldn't do justice for each of the breeds being developed because there wasn't enough room for a good physical description or pertinent information about genealogical problems peculiar to each breed to help guide breeders. To some the German Shorthair registry aka the Breed book (Zuchtbuch) was a better choice than the all-inclusive Hundestammbuch. Following is a chronology of the first three breed books that mark the beginning of recording the foundation stock for the German Shorthair breed.

1897 - The first Stud-book "Shorthair"(S.tK.) is published and contains entries 1 - 1074 with Hektor 1(wh. 1872) as the first recorded entry.

1898 - Volume 2 follows with entries 1705 to 3408 and contains 5 Weimaraners.

1899 - Volume 3 has entries 3409 - 5112 and contains 19 Weimaraners

With these three volumes published, a new period of development for the breed arrived. Different than the inclusive German Dog Stud-book, the Shorthair studbook contained multiple illustrations, abridged pedigrees of the most outstanding dogs as well as detailed contributions by the most prominent Shorthair experts of the time. It was not only a pedigree register but also an annual chronicle. In the first three year time frame the 5112 entries listed all German Shorthairs as well as two variants, the "Wurtembergers" and the Weimaraner. In 1900 the 4th Volume was published with 437 new entries of which 62 were Weimaraners.

The 1902 Standard written before the first black German Shorthairs were produced list the color brown along with its variations for the German Shorthair. A descriptive term "grey white" is used to describe the white hairs on a dark brown roan dog and further states that the inner sides of the hind legs as well as the tail at its tip are often of a lighter color. It says a dog with less solid patches the better for the dog when being judged. It also indicates the more brown on the head the better but does allow for ticking. It also mentions a lighter shade of brown with the white hairs being predominant along with the clear white dogs that were very much in a minority compared to the brown roan and solid brown dogs.

In 1907, Beechgrove Bess a solid black Arkwright pointer, was imported to Germany by Herr Bode and Dr. Waechter and bred to German Shorthair Treu Schmarsow. From this litter Dr. Waechter kept the solid black Wach Luna and mated her to German Shorthair Treu II v.d. Maylust that produced Wach-Freya with this litter the get would be three quarter German Shorthair and one quarter Arkwright pointer. Dr. Waechter and Herr Bode worked together using each others dog for breeding purpose, i.e Wach Tell (Pr.K. #6) a black and white whelped in 1913 was owned by Herr Bode and Rupp Altenau (Pr.K. #247) was owned by Dr. Waechter.

By 1924 Herr Kleeman in an effort to keep the peace and probably to withhold judgment proposed a section in the Studbook Shorthair to register the black German Shorthair with the designation Pr.K., "Prussian". Prussia being the largest and most influential state in Germany at the time and the dogs were being bred in Germany using the existing German stock. A like analogy in the U.S. would be to have a section designated using the name of one of its 50 states.

In 1925 when Dr. Thornton imported Senta von Hohenbruck, an Austrian bred German Shorthair, to the U.S. it is highly unlikely the breeders of the few "Prussians" being whelped at the time would let any of them leave their kennels much less be imported out of the country. So it stands to reason the first German Shorthairs brought to the U.S. would have been brown or some variation of brown.

By 1933 it was the qualities of Angus v. Schwarzatal (Pr.K. #102) that persuaded the German Club members to allow the blacks into the studbook on equal footing with the brown dogs. It is important to note the black colored dogs had not been kept as a separate strain but were being bred to the brown colored dogs since the point was to improve on the existing stock at the time. It is easy to ascertain from research it was not the color of the dogs but their conformation and performance that was important. Initially the brown colored dogs from the Prussian/German Shorthair litters were entered as Prussian. Several brown colored dogs with whelp dates of 1931 and 1933 found in the 1935 Zuchtbuch Kurzhaar listed as Prussian are Adda, Castor, Centa and Coralle Bramautal. Subsequently the brown colored dogs from such mating were registered as German Shorthairs while the black colored dogs were recorded in their section.

The 1935 Zuchtbuch with 2091 entries shows both the black dogs and the brown dogs recorded together on pages 56 - 201 under the title Kurzhaarige deutsche Vorstehunde. After the regular registry pages there is one page titled Stammbuch Preussian-Kurzhaar with one bitch and two dogs listed. Of the 2091 German Shorthairs registered 28 were black roans or black & white. The 3 listed on the page titled Stammbuch Preussian-Kurzhaar bring the total to 31. According to the

numbers assigned to the dogs/bitches in the Stammbuch Preussian-Kurzhaar section as of 1935 there were 254 with the designation Pr.K.

The 1935 Zuchtbuch didn't keep percentage statistics as were kept in later breed books but it was easy to ascertain the majority color of the registered dogs was Braunschimmel or some variation of brown. The least number of registered dogs was 6 recorded as Weiss.

The AKC did not recognize the German Shorthair breed until 1930. In 1935, "Sporting Dogs", an AKC official publication was printed. It contained the origin, history and standards of the 19 breeds recognized by The American Kennel Club at the time that comprised Group I. The German Shorthair Pointer standard found in this book and approved by AKC in April of 1935 was courtesy of the National German Shorthaired Pointer Dog Club. It is unknown if this club was the same group of individuals that subsequently petitioned AKC in 1938 to be the Parent Club for the breed.

According to this 1935 AKC printed standard the acceptable color was - Solid liver, liver and white spotted, liver and white spotted and ticked, liver and white ticked. Any colors other than liver and white not permitted. Listed as Faults: Black coat or tri-colored. Any color except liver or some combination of liver and white. This is the first reference to use the term "liver" instead of "brown".

This U. S. standard is interesting because by 1933 in Germany the black colored dogs were on equal footing with the brown and being bred interchangeably. There is no reference about tri-color in the 1935 Zuchtbuch. The following quote by Dr. Thornton might provide some insight. "I was once asked what we could do to improve the G.S. Pointer. That is a good question. It is a crime the way this breed was abused in their early history here in the U.S." He stated the early imports were crossed with Wires, Springers, and other hunting dogs and sold with papers as purebred GSPs. He continued on to say, "Also had pictures of some beautiful pups sent me by one of the early officers of the breed here in the U. S. that were half Springer. Fact is they registered them falsely from Chesapeake(sic) to every traveling hound that happen along." Based on Dr. Thorntons' comments and his knowledge of the breed both in Germany and the U.S. one might draw the conclusion that the basis for the section of the 1935 AKC standard that states, "black coat or tri-colored is a fault" could be because of the coat variations of the pups being produced by the cross bred GSPs Dr. Thornton refers to being registered as purebred.

In December of 1938, nine owners of GSPs make application to the AKC and subsequently the GSP Club of America becomes the Parent Club for the breed and in May 7, 1946 AKC approves their first breed standard. The acceptable color section is almost verbatim to the one printed in the 1935 AKC publication with exception of the addition of the terms liver roan and gray white as acceptable. There is no change to the colors listed as Faults, "...black coat or tri-colored, any color except liver or some combination of liver and white."

Due to the war the Zuchtbuch was not published for several years. The first post war issue, Volume G with 1572 entries from 1941 to 1949 was published in 1949 and the figures indicate a significant drop in the number of dogs/bitches registered. What does this have to do with the black GSP? A lot, considering they were fewer in numbers than the brown dogs. The writings of

Herr Seiger, Dr. Thornton, C. Bede Maxwell and Georgina Byrne tell of the hardships suffered by the German breeders and their dogs during and after WW II. It is documented that the dark brown roan dogs were preferred by controlling fascist government, so it stands to reason all else were to be done away with, i.e. white factors were to be destroyed along with anything that didn't blend with the forest. Some in an effort to protect their stock hid or sent them to individuals outside of the war expanded German territory. As a result, during this timeframe and after the war it was primarily the brown dogs that would be found in Germany and subsequently brought to the U.S. by the German immigrant and the American G.I.

Quell Pottmes whelped in 1967 was the first black and white Kurzhaar Sieger becoming a Kleeman Seiger in 1970. Out of a solid black sire and black ticked mother, Quell was a heavily ticked and patched black and white dog that was a very influential stud only to be surpassed by his grandson World Seiger Ciro v. Bichtelwald a black ticked dog. Purchased by the Stramanns of Hege-Haus kennel for the purpose to improve the head and hindquarter conformation of the inbred Hege-Haus dogs Ciro was a superb producer not only for the Hege-Haus and Niestetal kennels but also for a range of breeders throughout Germany. Ciro's influence was not only in Germany but also through his get and grand get to Scandinavia, United States, England and Australia. Dogs bred down from Ciro continue to influence the GSP breed we know today.

The German breeders continued to work to rebuild their kennels and their breeding stock. The 1973 Zuchtbuch has 2400 dogs & bitches registered down 386 entries from 1972 but almost double the numbers registered in 1949. The statistics page shows the brown color very much in the majority at 95.5%, a result of the actions taken during the war years by the Fascist to get rid of everything except the dark brown roan dogs thus affecting available breeding stock. The black dogs accounted for 4.47% while the white dogs came in at .04%

The standard written in the 1973 Zuchtbuch states the allowable colors for registration: brown without patches, brown with white or speckled with patches, dark brown with or without patches, light brown roan, white with patches. In the same gradations as with the brown are the same also with the black color. Gelber Brandt does not exclude from entry. Gelber Brandt refers to a sandy color that sometimes occurs around the muzzle and feet and according to Georgina Byrne is considered "very rare". Also found registered in the 1973 Zuchtbuch were German dogs owned by Americans: C. Lemley, Detroit USA and R. A. Patterson, Arlington Virginia/USA.

The 1975 American Standard, more detailed than its 1946 version, was the work of a Parent Club committee using the 1902 German Standard published in Herr Seiger's book as a reference. The process began in 1962 and was approved by the AKC in 1975. Since the 1902 German Standard was written before the first black dogs were whelped there would be no reference of the color black. Therefore the color disqualification section of the 1975 American Standard that states "a dog with any area of black, red, orange, lemon or tan or a dog solid white will be disqualified" might more accurately reflect the growing concern at the time of German Shorthairs being bred to field pointers and setters.

In 1992 the Standard was formatted according to AKC directive with no changes to the section on color or disqualifications.

The 2007 Zuchtbuch had 1221 dogs/bitches registered and showed the percentage of brown colored dogs to be 78%, the black at 21% and the white at .06%. If compared to percentage numbers in the 1973 Zuchtbuch, a span of 34 year, there is a decrease in the brown colored dogs from 95% to 78% and an increase in the black from 4% to 21% while the white dogs remains at less than 1 %. Thus it would appear the least preferred color of the German Shorthair is the white dog.

The purpose of this article is to provide a chronology as it pertains to the color black in the GSP breed and to dispel the misconception that the black GSP is a separate strain or a latter addition. It is important to note that the U. S. breed standard is only applied in the conformation ring unlike the German standard where it is applied to determine breeding stock. Breeding stock in Germany must not only pass the conformation aspect prior to being tested in the field for performance they must gain a high enough rating in both to be considered "breeding stock". At the outset the ideal in the U.S. was for the AKC standard to be used to evaluate breeding stock but there is no means for it to be applied across the spectrum of conformation and performance. Nor is there a restriction from breeding animals that don't meet the standard as is applied in Germany. Another misconception about the Breed standard is how can a black GSP be registered if the color is listed as a disqualification. It is because the AKC has an open registration for the GSP breed and if an applicant meets the AKC registration requirement the dog can be registered.