

Unraveling The GSP Standard: “Short back...Standing over plenty of ground”
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All Breed Standards are open to interpretation by the reader. Even clearly written Breed Standards can be difficult to understand. Standards were often written by horsemen, using terminology suitable for horses but perhaps not for dogs.

In the GSP standard, the statement “...with a short back, but standing over plenty of ground” causes much confusion. As it seems improbable that a dog could have both a short back and stand over plenty of ground. To understand the statement, one must consider the whole of the Standard.

For example, under *General Appearance*: *The German Shorthaired Pointer is a versatile hunter, an all-purpose gun dog capable of high performance in field and water. The judgment of Shorthairs in the show ring reflects this basic characteristic. The overall picture which is created in the observer's eye is that of an aristocratic, well balanced, symmetrical animal with conformation indicating power, endurance and agility and a look of intelligence and animation. The dog is neither unduly small nor conspicuously large. It gives the impression of medium size, but is like the proper hunter, **with a short back, but standing over plenty of ground.***

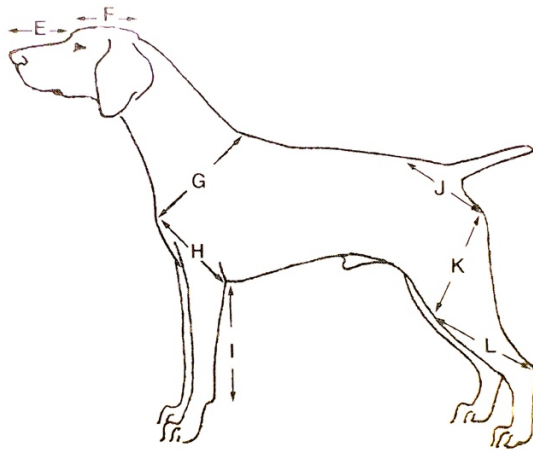
When reading this sentence: The dog is neither unduly small nor conspicuously large. It gives the impression of medium size, but is like a proper hunter with a short back, but standing over plenty of ground, Gorgina Byrne (Der Deutsch-Kurzhaar) is referencing the type of horse used for hunting with pack hounds to describe the GSP. The reason for this reference is because, like GSPs, horses used for hunting with a pack of dogs, need to be nimble yet powerful. Short-backed horses tend to perform better at this function. However, short-backed horses with straight angulation in the rear (like draft horse) do not. Hence the likely addition of “standing over plenty of ground” to describe the front and rear angulation required to be an athletic hunting dog.



Early German Shorthaired Pointer influencer and expert and President of the Berlin Stud Club (Stammklub) Dr. Paul Kleeman once said that the rules of structural engineering also apply to the rules of nature. To work right, a dog must be built right, it has to be born right.

So, one must also take angles and proportion into consideration. The desired angulation in GSPs is matched front and rear. Our Breed Standard calls for the layback of the Shoulder Blade from vertical nearing a 45% angle and the upper arm (Humerus) is as long as possible to

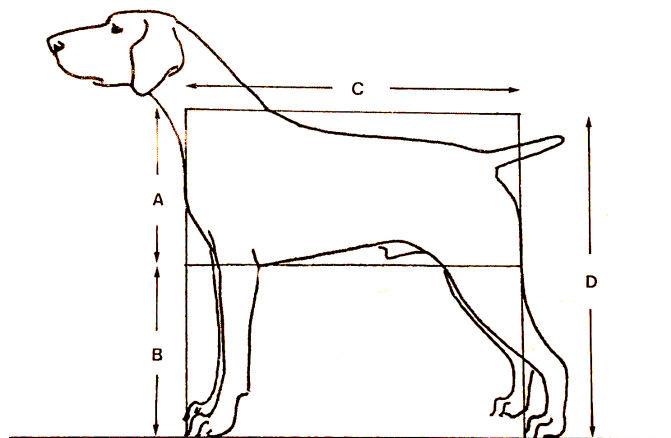
the elbow (Ulna), also nearing a 45% angle from vertical. To match, the Pelvic bone (Ilium to the Ischium) and the Hip joint to the Stifle joint (Femur) should also reflect the front angulation at approximately 45% angle each.



4.2b. Skull and foreface and foreface and forequarter/hindquarter bones/angles. E = approx. the same length as F. G = H = I (I may be slightly longer). J is to K & L as I is to 1.75 (approx.).

Good angulation facilitates a smooth, ground covering stride, which allows the Shorthair to hunt on all terrains, all day. Dogs with poor angulation, or unbalanced angulation work harder than a correctly built dog and move with a shortened stride and choppy gait. Despite their great desire to hunt, these dogs tend to be retired early due to injuries as they must work harder and put more stress on their bodies.

Critical to creating a short-backed dog standing over plenty of ground are the overall proportions of the GSP. In the standard the wording says: Measuring from the foremost projection of the rump and from the withers to the ground, the Shorthair is permissibly either square or slightly longer than he is tall.



4.2a. Overall height in relation to length. A = slightly less than B, D = slightly less than C. n.b. bitches may be slightly longer overall.

While, it is permissible for a GSP to be slightly longer than tall, it is a slippery slope. A longer back allows for more angulation in the rear without the associated foot interference or side-winding that would be seen in a shorter backed dog. These dogs may have a bigger stride and appear “flashier” in the show ring however, a longer back can be less stable and prone to injury.

A dog that is square or slightly longer than tall and has proper angulation will have the appearance of a “short-backed dog standing over plenty of ground” and will be able to move with an efficient, ground covering stride.

With GSPs, there is the added complication of coat markings that can create optical illusions of back length, shoulder and rear angulation. Judges must always “look beyond” coat markings to see the structure of the dog.

Also from the standard: Symmetry and field quality are most essential. A dog in hard and lean field condition is not to be penalized; however, overly fat or poorly muscled dogs are to be penalized. A dog well balanced in all points is preferable to one with outstanding good qualities and defects. 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. Further evidence of this heritage is movement which is balanced, alertly coordinated and without wasted motion.

Overall, judges must ask themselves, for a dog to look right, it must be built to move right. Flashiness is not desirable in a Shorthair. Look for an aristocratic grace in outline, power and endurance in the overall appearance, sloping shoulders that shape a strong short back, deep chest, with angulation that is balanced front and rear, a lithe gait without wasted movement - feet should remain close to the ground, good reach and drive – foot extension with follow through. Topline should remain firm with flexibility. Proper conformation is the key to proper ground covering movement.

¹ Source: