

Data Packet 2C:

German Shepard

reduced text and reformatted layout from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_shepard

The **German Shepherd** (**German**: *Deutscher Schäferhund*, (aka **Alsatian** and **Alsatian Wolf Dog**, both UK names) is a breed of large-sized dog that originated in Germany. German Shepherds are a relatively new breed of dog, with their origin dating to 1899. As part of the **Herding Group**, German Shepherds are working dogs developed originally for herding sheep. Since that time, however, because of their strength, intelligence, trainability and obedience, German Shepherds around the world are often the preferred breed for many types of work, including search-and-rescue, police and military roles and even **acting**.

Appearance

German Shepherds are large sized dogs. The breed standard height at the **withers** is 60–65 cm (24–26 in) for males and 55–60 cm (22–24 in) for females. The weight standard is 30–40 kilograms (66–88 lb.) for males and 22–32 kilograms (49–71 lb.) for females.

They have a domed forehead, a long square-cut muzzle and a black nose. The jaws are strong, with a scissor-like bite. The eyes are medium-sized and brown with a lively, intelligent and self-assured look. The ears are large and stand erect, open at the front and parallel, but they often are pulled back during movement. They have a long neck, which is raised when excited and lowered when moving at a fast pace. The tail is bushy and reaches to the **hock**.

German Shepherds can be a variety of colors, the most common of which are tan/black and red/black. Most color varieties have **black masks** and black body markings, which can range from a classic "saddle" to an over-all "blanket." More rare color variations include the sable, all-black, **all-white**, liver and blue varieties.

German Shepherds sport a **double coat**. The outer coat, which sheds all year round, is close and dense with a thick undercoat. The coat is accepted in two variants; medium and long. The long-hair gene is **recessive**, making the long-hair variety rarer.

Their paws have especially thick pads and are also webbed and dewclaws are common.

Behavior

German Shepherds were bred specifically for their **intelligence**, a trait for which they are now famous. In the book *The Intelligence of Dogs*, author **Stanley Coren** ranked the breed third for intelligence, behind **Border Collies** and **Poodles**. He found that they had the ability to learn simple tasks after only five repetitions and obeyed the first command given 95% of the time. Coupled with their strength, this trait makes the breed desirable as **police**, **guard** and **search and rescue dogs**, as they are able to quickly learn various tasks and interpret instructions better than other large breeds.

German Shepherd



| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Other names | Alsatian (UK) Berger Allemand Deutscher Schäferhund Schäferhund |
| Nicknames | GSD |
| Country of origin | Germany |
| | Traits [hide] |
| Weight | Male 30–40 kg (66–88 lb) ^[1] Female 23–33 kg (51–73 lb) ^[1] |
| Height | Male 60–65 cm (24–26 in) ^[1] Female 55–60 cm (22–24 in) ^[1] |
| Coat | Double coat |
| Color | Most commonly tan with black saddle |
| Litter size | 5–10 |
| Life span | 9–13 years ^[2] |
| | Classification and standards [show] |
| | Dog (<i>Canis lupus familiaris</i>) |

German Shepherds are a very popular selection for use as [working dogs](#). They are especially well known for their [police work](#), being used for tracking criminals, patrolling troubled areas and detection and holding of suspects. Additionally thousands of German Shepherds have been used by the military. Usually trained for [scout](#) duty, they are used to warn soldiers to the presence of enemies or of booby traps or other hazards. German Shepherds have also been trained by military groups to parachute from aircraft or as [anti-tank weapons](#). They were used in World War II as [messenger dogs](#), rescue dogs and personal guard dogs. A number of these dogs were taken home by foreign servicemen, who were impressed by its intelligence.



Urban Search and Rescue Task Force dog works to uncover survivors at the site of the [collapsed World Trade Center](#) after the [September 11, 2001 attacks](#)

The German Shepherd Dog is one of the most widely used breeds in a wide variety of scent-work roles. These include [search and rescue](#), [cadaver searching](#), [narcotics](#) detection, [accelerant](#) detection and mine detection dog, among others. They are suited for these lines of work because of their keen sense of smell and their ability to work regardless of distractions. At one time the German Shepherd was the breed chosen almost exclusively to be used as a [guide dog](#) for the [visually impaired](#).

In Germany, German Shepherds are still used for herding and tending sheep grazing in meadows next to gardens and crop fields. They are expected to patrol the boundaries to keep sheep from trespassing and damaging the crops. In Germany and other places these skills are tested in utility dog trials also known as HGH (Herdengebrauchshund) herding utility dog trials.

History

In Europe during the 1850s, attempts were being made to standardize breeds. The dogs were bred to preserve traits that assisted in their job of herding sheep and protecting flocks from predators. In Germany this was practiced within local communities, where shepherds selected and bred dogs that they believed had the skills necessary for herding sheep, such as intelligence, speed, strength and keen senses of smell. The results were dogs that were able to do such things, but that differed significantly, both in appearance and ability, from one locality to another.

To combat these differences, the [Phylax Society](#) was formed in 1891 with the intention of creating standardized development plans for native dog breeds in Germany. The society disbanded after only three years due to ongoing internal conflicts regarding the traits in dogs that the society should promote; some members believed dogs should be bred solely for working purposes, while others believed dogs should be bred also for appearance. While unsuccessful in their goal, the Phylax Society had inspired people to pursue standardizing dog breeds independently.

With the rise of large, industrialized cities in Germany, the predator population began to decline, rendering sheepdogs unnecessary. At the same time, the awareness of sheepdogs as a versatile, intelligent class of canine began to rise. [Max von Stephanitz](#), an ex-cavalry captain and former student of the Berlin Veterinary College, was an ex-member of the Phylax Society who firmly believed dogs should be bred for working. He admired the intelligence, strength and ability of Germany's native sheepdogs, but could not find any one single breed that satisfied him as the perfect working dog.

In 1899, Von Stephanitz was attending a dog show when he was shown a dog named *Hektor Linksrhein*. Hektor was the product of few generations of selective breeding and completely fulfilled what Von Stephanitz believed a working dog should be. He was pleased with the strength of the dog and was so taken by the animal's intelligence, loyalty and beauty that he purchased him immediately. After purchasing the dog he changed his name to [Horand von Grafrath](#) and Von Stephanitz founded the [Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde](#) (Society for the German Shepherd Dog). Horand was declared to be the first German Shepherd Dog and was the first dog added to the society's breed register.

Horand became the center-point of the breeding programs and was bred with dogs belonging to other society members that displayed desirable traits and with dogs from other parts of Germany. Fathering many pups, Horand's most successful was *Hektor von Schwaben*. Hektor was inbred with another of Horand's offspring and produced *Heinz von Starkenburg*, *Beowulf* and *Pilot*, who later fathered a total of eighty-four pups, mostly through being inbred with Hektor's other offspring. This inbreeding was deemed necessary in order to fix the traits being sought in the breed. In the original German Shepherd studbook, *Zuchtbuch für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SZ)*, within the two pages of entries from SZ No. 41 to SZ No. 76, there are four Wolf Crosses. Beowulf's progeny also were inbred and it is from these pups that all German Shepherds draw a genetic link. It is believed the society accomplished its goal mostly due to Von Stephanitz's strong, uncompromising leadership and he is therefore credited with being the creator of the German Shepherd Dog.

Health

Many common ailments of the German Shepherds are a result of the inbreeding practiced early in the breed's life.

One such common ailment is [hip](#) and [elbow dysplasia](#), which may lead to the dog experiencing pain in later life and may cause [arthritis](#). A study by the [University of Zurich](#) in police working dogs found that 45% were affected by degenerative spinal stenosis, although the sample studied was small. The [Orthopedic Foundation for Animals](#) found that 19.1% of German Shepherds are affected by hip dysplasia.

Due to the large and open nature of their ears, German Shepherds are not prone to ear infections.

[Degenerative myelopathy](#), a neurological disease, occurs with enough regularity specifically in the breed to suggest that the breed is predisposed to it. A very inexpensive DNA saliva test is now available to screen for Degenerative Myelopathy. This test screens for the mutated gene that has been seen in dogs with degenerative myelopathy.

Additionally, German Shepherds have a higher than normal incidence of [Von Willebrand Disease](#), a common inherited bleeding disorder.