

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO BUYING, OWNING, AND TRAINING

the German
Shepherd Dog

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BREED
basics

WILLOW CREEK PRESS





Contents

Chapter One:

WHAT MAKES A GERMAN SHEPHERD SPECIAL? 6
Mental make-up; The versatile Shepherd; Physical characteristics; Where did they come from?; Founding father; Growing recognition; Troubled times; The true type.

Chapter Two:

CHOOSING A GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG 14
Self-assessment; Doing your homework; Making contact; Meeting the dogs; Assessing the litter; No guarantees; Making your choice; Words of warning; Double trouble; An older pup; The pet puppy; Colour and coat; Dog or bitch?; Working potential; Show potential; Rescued dogs; Getting ready (The garden; The house; Equipment; Toys; Indoor crate; Veterinary care).

Chapter Three:

WELCOME HOME! 36
Paperwork; The journey; Arriving home; Introducing the family (The resident dog; Meeting the cat); Handle with care; Sleeping arrangements (The first week; The next stage); House-training; Feeding (Balanced diet; Complete foods; Alternative menus; Water; Faddy feeders; Chews; Possessiveness; Food treats); Car travel; Exercise; Vaccinations; Worming; Insurance; Socialisation (New

experiences; Dangerous delays; Home visitors; The fear period); Children (Mutual respect); House rules (Discipline; Handling; Solitude; Good habits).

Chapter Four:

STARTING RIGHT

58

Training methods (Hierarchy; Confrontation; Timing; Praise; Repetition; Voice; Clicker training; Expert help); Dominance training (Crucial development; Mouthing; Nipping children; Strength games; The half-hour stay; Who goes first?); Basic training (Recall; Lead training; Sit; Down; Stay).

Chapter Five:

ROUTINE CARE

72

Exercise; Feeding (What to feed); Grooming (Dental care; Nail care; Ears); Travel; Neutering (Spaying; Castration); Breeding a litter (Expense; The litter; After-care); Senior care; Euthanasia.

Chapter Six:

HAVING FUN WITH YOUR GERMAN SHEPHERD

84

Canine Good Citizen; Therapy dogs; Competition Obedience; Agility; Flyball; Working trials/tracking; The show dog; The Breed Standard; Is my dog good enough?; Show training.

Chapter Seven:

THE HEALTHY SHEPHERD

96

Preventative care (Parasites [Fleas, Ticks, Roundworms, Tapeworms] Vaccinations); First aid and accidents (Allergic reaction, Burns, Choking, Cuts, Heatstroke); A-Z of diseases and disorders.



Appendix:

FURTHER INFORMATION

112



What Makes A German Shepherd Special?

The German Shepherd Dog is one of the most popular of all breeds, and he has a fan club that extends worldwide. What is it that makes the German Shepherd so special?

MENTAL MAKE-UP

The true German Shepherd is a calm, confident and good-natured dog. He is alert, biddable, easy to train and highly intelligent. These traits, coupled with his courage, make the German Shepherd an excellent working and herding dog. As a companion dog in the pet home, given the correct socialisation and training, he is willing to please and incredibly loyal to his family.

If you allow it, the Shepherd can become dominant; you must be the boss, not him. It is therefore important that the ground rules are established early on when he is a puppy. The Shepherd is very intelligent, and he will learn bad habits just as quickly as he will learn good ones, so you must always be one step ahead!

He is a lively, active dog and can be noisy at times, as he does like to voice his opinion! The Shepherd is a good, all-round family dog who likes to have his mind occupied and be with his family.

THE VERSATILE SHEPHERD

Some breeds go in and out of fashion, but the German Shepherd has maintained top-ranking status throughout his history. One of the reasons for this is the breed's amazing versatility. German Shepherds have been adopted worldwide as police dogs where their guarding and tracking skills come to the fore. The Shepherd is also widely used by prison services and other security services.

However, this is not the extent of the Shepherd's skills. His intelligence, loyalty and trainability have been harnessed for work as an assistance dog. The German Shepherd is a highly successful guide dog for the blind, and he is also used to work with the disabled. A calm and kind animal, the Shepherd has also proved his worth as a therapy dog, bringing comfort to the sick and elderly.



The German Shepherd is a courageous police dog.

In his role as a companion, the German Shepherd is a loving and faithful member of the family, but he can also be a successful competitor, excelling in Obedience, Agility, Working Trials and Tracking. Always adaptable, he has even made his mark in Canine Freestyle (Heelwork to Music). Whatever canine activity is on offer, a Shepherd will thrive on the challenge.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The German Shepherd is an agile, medium-sized dog, with a strong, well-muscled build. He is slightly longer than he is tall. The Shepherd male measures 24-26 in (60-65 cm) at the shoulder; bitches are slightly smaller, measuring 22-24 in (55-60 cm). The head is noble in appearance, and it is easy to discern males and females.

The line of the back slopes slightly from front to back, and the Shepherd is characterized by free, elastic, far-reaching movement – which is a joy to behold.

The correct coat is a straight, harsh outer coat with a thick undercoat. The long-coated Shepherd looks attractive, and is a popular option for pet owners. However, the long coat is considered a fault (it rarely has the correct undercoat), so Shepherds of this type would never win in the show ring.

There are a number of colours to choose from. Shepherds may be all black, bi-colour (predominantly black with a small amount of gold on the legs), black and gold, grey or gold sable. White Shepherds have their own band of enthusiasts, but this colour is not correct for the breed.



Sensitive and intelligent, the Shepherd is highly prized as an assistance dog.

Powerful and well muscled, the Shepherd conveys an impression of strength, intelligence and agility.



WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Shepherd dogs have existed in Germany for centuries and were used for herding and guarding livestock. The German Shepherd Dog has become so well known as a police dog that this role has largely been forgotten. But, in fact, German Shepherds retain their herding instincts, as can be seen by those dogs who compete in the American Kennel Club's Herding Tests.

The early working dogs were of mixed type. Strong, powerful dogs were found in the southern hills, while more athletic dogs appeared on the central and northern plains where they would trot tirelessly for miles.

FOUNDING FATHER

It is rare for one person to get the credit for establishing a breed, but Captain Max von Stephanitz has this distinction. In 1899, he formed the first German Shepherd breed club, which was called the Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SV).

As president of the club, von Stephanitz was dedicated to improving the breed and creating one type, while still preserving the superb working abilities of the dogs. Strict rules and regulations were laid down by the SV and a Breed Standard was drawn up. A major Championship show was held annually, known as the Sieger Show, where the best dog and bitch won the title of Sieger and Siegerin.

The first German Shepherd to be registered with the SV was Horand von Grafrath, who was owned by von Stephanitz and considered to be a fine example of the breed. Horand's son, Hektor von Schwaben, was made Sieger in 1900 and 1901 and he was essentially a combination of the northern and southern types.

GROWING RECOGNITION

The German Shepherd's tremendous working ability was swiftly recognised. The breed was adopted by the German Police in the early 1900s, and then by the armed forces when the First World War broke out. At the end of the war, servicemen returned home telling tales of these heroic and intelligent dogs.



It was not long before the German Shepherd's fame spread outside his native home.



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Noble, loyal and highly intelligent, the German Shepherd Dog is the breed that has it all. Beautiful to look at, kind and affectionate, the German Shepherd is quick to learn, and will take on all training challenges that come his way.

In this superbly illustrated book, the author traces the development of the breed and follows it up with comprehensive information on puppy care and training, adult management, plus fun activities to get involved with. Easy to read and packed with facts, this book is a must for all German Shepherd enthusiasts.

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