

# GERMAN WIREHAired POINTER

BY NIKKI RIGGSBEE

**G**erman Wirehaired Pointers were developed in Germany in the late 1800s. It is a rugged, versatile hunting dog that can work in different terrains. This medium sized breed is known for his distinctive protective wire coat with facial furnishings.

Other breeds include coat descriptions in the breeds' names in addition to others that also use "wirehaired": curly-coated, flat coated, griffon, hairless, wire, smooth, and soft coat. I wondered how important German Wirehaired Pointer experts would consider the coat which is part of the breed's name.

Thirty-three GWP breeder-judges and mentors were found and invited to participate in a survey on their breed. Twenty-eight agreed to do so. This response was promising, but only sixteen completed surveys were returned. It is a sufficient number to produce a reasonable result, but it was less than half of the number of experts invited. Thanks so much to those who found the time to contribute.

Those who took the survey averaged over thirty-two years in the breed. Those who were judges have been adjudicating the breed for nearly seventeen years on average. Many of those have judged their national and other GWP specialties.

## Prioritizing Virtues

The survey included a list of breed virtues taken from the German Wirehaired Pointer standard for the experts to prioritize from the most important to the least important. Here is the list of GWP

characteristics in sequence by the experts' average ranks, with 1 being the most important.

1. Outer coat straight, harsh, wiry, flat lying, 1" to 2" in length
2. Angles of the hindquarters balances that of the forequarters
3. Movement: good reach in forequarters and good driving power in hindquarters
4. Sound reliable temperament
5. Shoulders well laid back
6. Body a little longer than high, as ten is to nine
7. Chest deep, capacious
8. Back line showing a perceptible slope down from withers to croup
9. Scissors bite
10. Muzzle fairly long, nasal bone straight, broad, parallel to top of skull
11. Thighs strong and muscular
12. Hips broad, croup nicely rounded
13. Feet round, high arched, toes close, pads thick and hard
14. Tail set high, carried at or above horizontal when alert



*This article is not intended to promote fault or part judging. Nor is it to imply that any characteristic called for in the standard is unimportant. Judging, and breeding, is about prioritizing and about what the judge or breeder will forgive. Discussing priorities can help in learning how to better evaluate a breed.*

*Questions, Comments, or Concerns?  
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## BREED PRIORITIES - GERMAN WIREHAIRD POINTER

15. Eyes brown, medium size, oval, overhung with medium length eyebrows
16. Ears rounded, not too broad, hang close to head

A majority of the virtues had a majority of the experts agreeing on their importance, crowned by “Outer coat straight, harsh, wiry, flat lying, 1” to 2” in length” (1<sup>st</sup>) with all the surveys placing it in the top quartile and eight of them placing it first. This group confirms the importance of the coat in the name of the breed.

Fifteen of the group concurred on “Ears rounded, not too broad, hang close to head” (16<sup>th</sup>) with seven placing it last. Nearly as many (thirteen) similarly valued “Movement: good reach in forequarters and good driving power in hindquarters” (3<sup>rd</sup>). “Shoulders well laid back” (5<sup>th</sup>) had a majority of twelve ranking it between 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>.

Eleven put “Angles of the hindquarters balances that of the forequarters” (2<sup>nd</sup>) in the top quartile. Another eleven ranked “Back line showing a perceptible slope down from withers to croup” (8<sup>th</sup>) in the third quartile.

The smallest majority (nine) agreed on “Sound reliable temperament” (4<sup>th</sup>), “Hips broad, croup nicely rounded” (12<sup>th</sup>), “Feet round, high arched, toes close, pads thick and hard” (13<sup>th</sup>), “Tail set high, carried at or above horizontal when alert” (14<sup>th</sup>), and “Eyes brown, medium size, oval, overhung with medium length eyebrows” (15<sup>th</sup>). “Hips/croup” was below midpoint for the majority, while five thought it more important; “Feet” had a similar distribution. “Tail” was unimportant for nine, while five had it midpoint or above. Nine also considered “Eyes” unimportant, although five had it somewhat more important.

Most characteristics without a majority opinion had split opinions. “Body a little longer than high, as ten is to nine” (6<sup>th</sup>) had it just above midpoint for six, very important for five, and below average for five. Half the group put “Chest deep, capacious” (7<sup>th</sup>) midpoint or higher, although five thought it definitely below average. “Thighs strong and muscular” (11<sup>th</sup>) had a similar distribution.

“Scissors bite” (9<sup>th</sup>) was in the third quartile for seven; four thought it much more important and another four had it towards the bottom. Seven ranked “Muzzle fairly long, nasal bone straight, broad, parallel to top of skull” (10<sup>th</sup>) middling, although another seven had it well below average.

“Wirehaired coat” (1<sup>st</sup>) was ranked almost two points higher than second place, another confirmation of its importance. “Height to length” (6<sup>th</sup>) was more than two points ahead of seventh place “Chest,” verifying the importance of the top six features. “Ear shape” (16<sup>th</sup>) was more than two points lower than the adjacent characteristic, proof of its least value among the features in the list.

Some average ranks were fairly close, so that additional input might change some relative placements. “Hips/croup” (12<sup>th</sup>) and “Feet” (13<sup>th</sup>) average ranks were less than a tenth of a point apart.

Eleven of the sixteen characteristics had majority agreement, more than many other surveys, giving more confidence in the results.

### Ranking Faults

The survey also included a list of German Wirehaired Pointer faults taken directly from or derived from their standard for the experts to rank. The following is the list of faults in sequence by

the average rank, from most serious to least serious, with 1 being the most serious.

1. Lacking the correct coat
2. Legs with tendency to cross or interfere when moving in a straight line
3. Lack of firm back (when moving)
4. Elbowing out
5. Extreme or excessive grooming
6. Hocks turning in or out
6. (tie) Unfriendly toward strangers
8. Ribs not well sprung
9. Lacking a full complement of evenly set, properly intermeshing teeth
10. Black in the coat
11. Yellow eyes
12. Lacking beard and whiskers of medium length
13. Dogs either over or under the specified height
14. Skin not notably tight to the body
15. Spotted or flesh colored nose
16. Dewlap

Eleven virtues had majority agreement; the experts had majority opinions on ten faults – better than typical consistency.

Fifteen of the surveys put “Lacking the correct coat” (1<sup>st</sup>) in the top quartile, with half placing it first overall. This matches the first place virtue. Next greatest agreement, with thirteen were on “Lack of firm back (when moving)” (3<sup>rd</sup>) and “Skin not notably tight to the body” (14<sup>th</sup>).

“Elbowing out” (4<sup>th</sup>) was similarly valued by eleven experts. Eleven also agreed on “Spotted or flesh colored nose” (15<sup>th</sup>) although five thought it somewhat more of a problem. Ten had “Hocks turning in or out” (tied at 6<sup>th</sup>) in the second quartile, but five had it below average, lowering its average.

Nine experts concurred on “Ribs not well sprung” (8<sup>th</sup>), “Lacking a full complement of evenly set, properly intermeshing teeth” (9<sup>th</sup>), “Dogs either over or under the specified height” (13<sup>th</sup>), and “Dewlap” (16<sup>th</sup>). “Dewlap” was in the fourth quartile for the majority, while another seven ranked it in the third quartile.

Most of the faults without majority agreement had bi-polar opinions. “Legs with tendency to cross or interfere when moving in a straight line” (2<sup>nd</sup>) was in the top quartile for eight, and the next quartile for seven. Eight had “Unfriendly toward strangers” (tied for 6<sup>th</sup>) ranked among the top three, but five had it towards the bottom. “Yellow eyes” (11<sup>th</sup>) was around the bottom quartile for half the group, but the other half were all over.

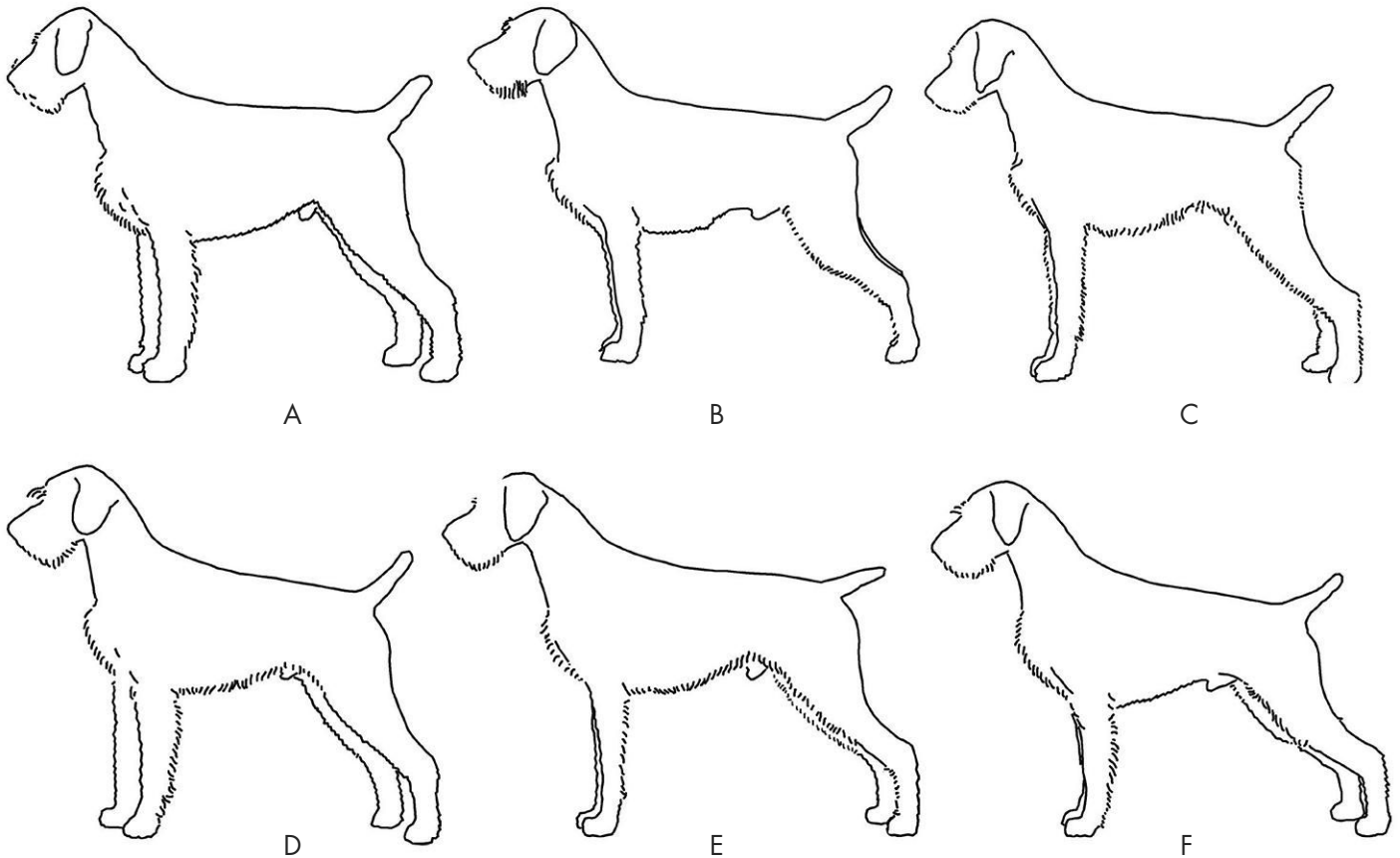
Seven had “Extreme or excessive grooming” (5<sup>th</sup>) in the top quartile for seven, but the other experts were all over. “Black in the coat” (10<sup>th</sup>) was in bottom quartile for seven, while five had it near the top. The standard for the related German Shorthaired Pointer DQs black in the coat and “Flesh colored nose” (15<sup>th</sup>). “Lacking beard and whiskers of medium length” (12) was near bottom for six, slightly above average for five, and in the third quartile for four; this is part of correct coat, but apparently a less important component. You might check with your mentors on their opinions on those items with less agreement.

Additional input would break the tie at six and might change the relative ranks of “Crossing/interfering” (2<sup>nd</sup>) and “Back not firm”

## German Wirehaired Pointer Outlines

*Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex*

### DOGS



(3<sup>rd</sup>) whose averages were less than a tenth of a point apart.

“Incorrect coat” (1<sup>st</sup>) was more than three points higher than the second place fault, again confirming the importance of coat in this breed.

As mentioned, this group was very consistent in valuing coat. Movement was third as a virtue, second and fourth (and maybe third and sixth) as faults. “Good temperament” was fourth, close to “Bad temperament” tied for sixth. “Chest” and “Ribs not sprung” were one rank apart. “Dentition/bite” was ninth on both lists.

Less consistent was “Height vs. length” sixth when correct, but thirteenth as a fault. “Correct eyes” were fifteen, but “Yellow eyes” comes in at eleven.

### Essential Characteristics

The survey asked the experts to list four to six characteristics that a German Wirehaired Pointer must have, that they look for when evaluating their breed.

Most often mentioned were coat and movement, which matched the lists above. The coat should be harsh, not profuse, and have undercoat, beard and eyebrows. The movement should be balanced, have moderate reach and drive on side gait, and be clean coming and going. Also frequently named were

balance and temperament.

### Outlines

The survey included outlines of six GWP dogs and six bitches and asked the experts to place each set first through fourth. The outlines were made from photos of good quality, real dogs, so none is ideal. GWPs have some coat which affects the outlines. Experts can see through the coat, though. They might change their placements if they could get their hands on the dogs, see expression, and watch the dogs move. Note that one survey did not complete this portion, so fifteen surveys were processed for the outlines results.

The GWP male with the best placement average and half the experts placing him first was dog “F.” Those who placed him first said “a standout, nice shoulders, nice rear angles, nice topline, balanced overall,” “masculine, correct arch to neck,” “more depth of body,” “closest to standard, looks in good condition, length of neck vs. hock, good chest,” “good length of upper arm, hocks well let down, topline slopes a little,” “proper outline,” “smooth flow of neck through topline, pleasing head,” and “looks like he might have a good coat.”

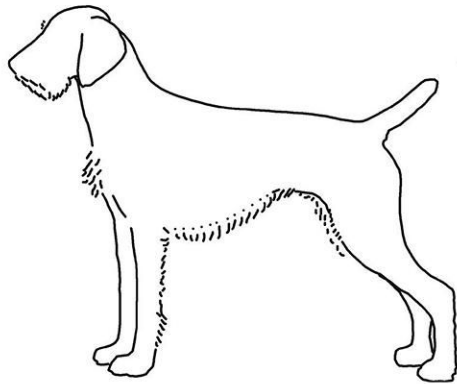
The dog with the next best placement average was GWP “D”.



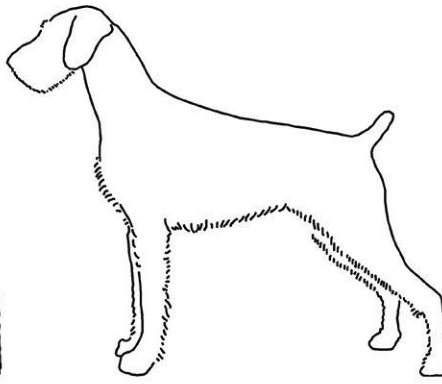
## German Wirehaired Pointer Outlines

*Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex*

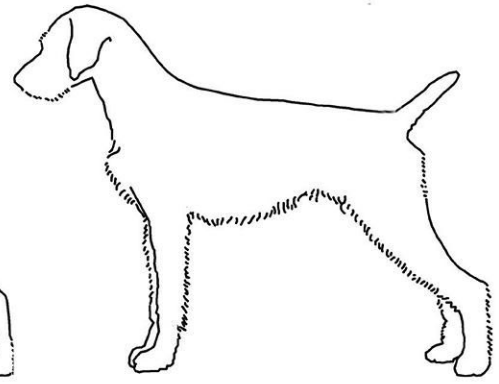
### BITCHES



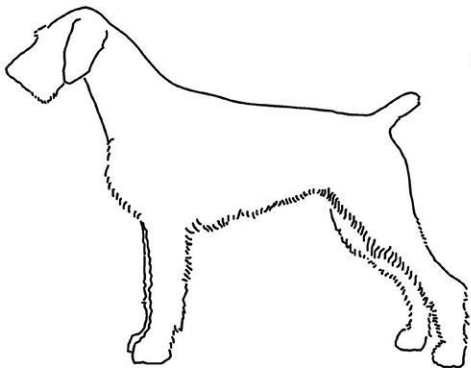
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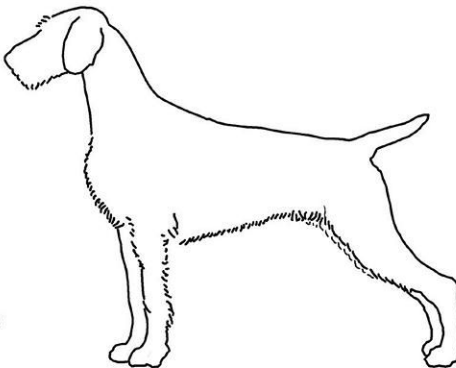
V



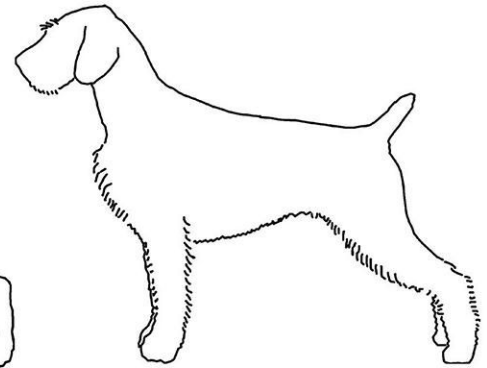
W



X



Y



Z

Those who liked him said “balanced, length to height 10:9, topline slope, chest depth,” “overall balance and breed type,” moderate angulation, balanced front and rear, not excessive hair, nice ear placement,” and “correct tailset, correct rear.” Some thought he was too square.

The bitch with the best average placement and most first placements among the bitches was GWP “Z.” Those who placed her first commented “correct proportion and outline,” “way superior, could be in better condition,” “smooth neck/shoulder,” “good breed type, strong,” “a stand out, nice layback, pretty, angled rear, nice bone and topline,” and “balanced, correct body, may have too much head.”

The second place bitch with an average placement just .2 points lower and two fewer first placements than “Z” was bitch “X.” Notes on her included “balanced at both ends, good angles, nice flowing topline, parallel planes,” “10/9 proportions, tail set high, tight feet,” “more bone and front angulation,” “moderate and balanced,” and “good head, nice underline.”

GWP “F” edged out bitch “Z” for Best of Breed on average placements, most first placements, and was named BOB by one-third of the experts, more than any other. Bitch “Z” was Best of Opposite Sex, selected BOB on one less survey than “F.” “D” and “X” were the only others named Best of Breed on the surveys.

All of the outlines placed first on at least one survey except for “A,” “C,” and “U.” All of the outlines placed out of the ribbons by at least one expert except for “D.” Two German Wirehaired pointers were unplaced by all of the experts: “C” and “U.”

### Additional Notes

Comments offered by the German Wirehaired Pointer breeder-judges and mentors for students of the breed were:

- These are versatile gun dogs, hunting on land and water for fur and feather.
- Dark liver pigment; “the darker the pigment, the harsher the coat.”
- Never reward a GWP that shies away from the judge.
- Evaluate the texture of the coat and depth; more is not necessarily better.
- Puppies: proper coat may be quite short and wiry; eyes darken if they have a dark ring around the iris.
- They should have moderate angulation and be balanced.
- Tend to be protective and loyal to their people, generally reserved with strangers.
- More than a perceptible slope to the topline is not correct.

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## BREED PRIORITIES - GERMAN WIREHAIRD POINTER

- Remember what the breed was meant to do: including muzzle length and dentition.
- Excessive, over-groomed coats should not be rewarded.
- Efficient movement and correct coat are critical.
- The GWP is meant to be a wire coated dog with high drive.
- Don't reward heavy bodied dogs or dogs with profuse soft coat over lesser correct coat.
- A square head and round eye are the drag of the breed. The head should be long and the eye oval.
- If the dog's nose is brown, it is genetically impossible for black to be in the coat.
- The body is a little longer than tall, as ten is to nine; it is not square.

*Much appreciation to the German Wirehaired Pointer experts for sharing their knowledge through this survey.*