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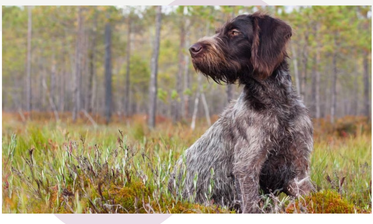
German Wirehaired Pointer

By Zack Newman. Reviewed by Barri J. Morrison, DVM on Oct. 20, 2023



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German Wirehaired Pointers trace their ancestry to 1800s Germany. Breeders set out to create a dog that would thrive in various environments—from mountains to forests to open fields—and sniff out and point game, whether it be birds or foxes. The result was this medium-sized, bearded German hunting dog.

Still used for hunting today, German Wirehaired Pointers have a scruffy double coat that keeps them warm in cold weather and protects them from the elements. The German name for the breed is the Deutsch Drahthaar Pointer.

Caring for a German Wirehaired Pointer

German Wirehaired Pointers are high-energy dogs that do best with a job and purpose in the family. While they don't need to be hunters, they do need lots of exercise and mental stimulation to be happy.

GWPs (as they're often called) love to be outside in nature. If you live in the city or in the suburbs, take them on a daily long walk and for longer hikes on the weekends. The German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America (GWPCA) says these sporting dogs also thrive in organized competitions, such as agility, obedience, and hunting trials.

As medium-sized dogs, German Wirehaired Pointer puppies grow to be 22–26 inches tall and weigh 50–70 pounds.

German Wirehaired Pointer Health Issues

German Wirehaired Pointers are generally healthy dogs that live an average of 14–16 years—longer than the typical lifespan of a medium-sized dog. But like all dogs, GWPs can develop certain health conditions. Pet insurance might be a good investment for your German Wirehaired Pointer puppy.

Von Willebrand Disease

Von Willebrand Disease (vWD) is a genetic blood disorder often seen in German Wirehaired Pointers. The condition prevents a dog's blood from clotting, thanks to a deficiency in a protein called the von Willebrand factor.

This makes bleeding in GWPs dangerous, and you should take your dog to the vet if you notice any unusual bruising, blood in their urine, bleeding from the gums, or nosebleeds. vWD can be detected through a blood test and, though there isn't a cure, the condition can be managed; dogs with vWD can live long, happy lives.

Hypothyroidism

Just like in humans, a dog's thyroid glands help turn food into energy. When a dog's thyroid becomes underactive, it can lead to obesity, lethargy, and chronic skin and ear infections.

Hypothyroidism is diagnosed with a blood test. While there's no cure, the condition can be managed with lifelong medication. Dogs receiving treatment for hypothyroidism can live long, relatively normal lives.

Hip and Elbow Dysplasia

Hip dysplasia in dogs is a condition where the hip joint doesn't develop properly and becomes loose. Similarly, elbow dysplasia is when the elbow joint develops abnormally. Both conditions can lead to pain and arthritis.

Hip and elbow dysplasia can be managed with medications, joint supplements, and weight management, though surgery might be required if the case is severe. Talk to your vet about which method is best for your dog.

What To Feed a German Wirehaired Pointer

German Wirehaired Pointers should eat a food that meets the nutritional standards set by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) and is formulated for their current life stage. Talk to your veterinarian about what food is best for your dog.

How To Feed a German Wirehaired Pointer

Adult German Wirehaired Pointers should be fed twice a day: at breakfast and dinner. German Wirehaired Pointer puppies should be fed more often: three or four times per day on a regular schedule.

How Much Should You Feed a German Wirehaired Pointer?

Your dog food packaging will contain feeding guidelines for your dog based on their weight. This is a good place to start, but the best way to know how much to feed your dog is by talking to your vet. Your veterinarian will give you portion guidance based on your dog's health, weight, and lifestyle.

Nutritional Tips for German Wirehaired Pointers

As long as your dog eats a well-balanced diet approved by the AAFCO, they won't need supplements. Your vet may recommend supplements, however, based on the health needs of your dogs. Never give a dog supplements before talking with a vet.

Behavior and Training Tips for German Wirehaired Pointers

German Wirehaired Pointer Personality and Temperament

German Wirehaired Pointers are ready for adventure thanks to their robust energy, strength, and intelligence. According to the GWPCA, giving this pup a job is a must—even if it's just fetching your slippers in the morning.

GWPs form a close bond to their family and do well with children who have been taught how to interact with animals. As with every breed, all interactions between dogs and kids should be supervised. However, because this dog has a high prey drive due to their history as hunters, they might not live well with cats or other small animals.

German Wirehaired Pointer Behavior

GWPs can be anxious, especially if they are away from their pet parent. German Wirehaired Pointers often want to be with their people constantly. Crate training them from an early age can help decrease separation anxiety, but your GWP should never be left alone for long periods.

If you don't like being outside, the GWPCA says a German Wirehaired Pointer won't be a good fit for you. Make sure you can meet the breed's need for exercise and stimulation. If they grow bored, German Wirehaired Pointers will bark or dig to occupy themselves.

German Wirehaired Pointer Training

Because of their smarts and independent spirit in the field, German Wirehaired Pointers need patient training grounded in positive reinforcement. Forming a close bond with your dog is key to training them, according to the breed club.

Fun Activities for German Wirehaired Pointers

- Hunting
- Running
- Hiking
- Agility
- Obedience
- Fetch
- Nose work
- Puzzles

German Wirehaired Pointer Grooming Guide

These German hunting dogs need special care paid to their coat. But otherwise, GWPs are low- maintenance for grooming.

Skin Care

Because German Wirehaired Pointers love spending so much time outside, keep them up to date on flea and tick prevention, and always check their skin for ticks.

Contact your vet if you notice changes in your dog's skin, such as flakiness or redness. This could be indicative of a bigger problem.

Coat Care

German Wirehaired Pointers have a double coat that helps keep them warm and protects them from hazards as they hunt. Their fur needs to be stripped (hairs are removed at the root by hand instead of clipped) twice a year. Pet parents can learn to do this on their own, but a specialized groomer can also do it for you.

If a GWP's coat isn't stripped, it will lose its characteristic wiry texture. This breed rarely needs a bath, but when they do, the National German Wirehaired Pointer Rescue recommends using a shampoo made for wire-coated breeds to preserve the texture.

Eye Care

A GWP's eyes should be examined annually to check for any issues. Contact your vet if you notice changes in your dog's eyes or vision, such as discharge, redness, or cloudiness.

Ear Care

Regularly (once a month, or more frequently as instructed by your veterinarian) clean your dog's ears with a veterinary-approved cleaner to stave off ear infections. Talk to your vet if you notice odor or debris coming from your pup's ears, or if they're scratching at their ears.

Considerations for Pet Parents

The perfect home for a German Wirehaired Pointer is filled with people who love the outdoors (preferably hunting) and won't be away from their dog for long stretches of time. GWPs need constant mental and physical stimulation to keep them—and you—happy. Expect to spend lots of time outdoors with your German Wirehaired Pointer at your side.

German Wirehaired Pointer FAQs

Is a German Wirehaired Pointer a good family dog?

According to the breed club, German Wirehaired Pointers are extremely devoted dogs that crave human companionship. They can make great family dogs when trained and socialized from an early age.

Do German Wirehaired Pointers bark a lot?

Bored German Wirehaired Pointers will bark to entertain themselves, so make sure your pup gets enough exercise, attention, and mental stimulation to keep them happy—and keep the barking to a minimum.

Are German Wirehaired Pointers good off-leash?

Every dog is an individual, and it's important to teach a GWP recall whenever they're off-leash. This breed has a strong prey drive, which means they're inclined to chase smaller animals when given the chance. It's always best to keep your German Wirehaired Pointer on a leash or in a fenced space.

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