



Weltunion der Schäferhund-Vereine (WUSV)

Prof. Dr. Heinrich Meßler
Birkenallee 23
41063 Mönchengladbach / Germany

Mobil: +49 175 6879756
E-Mail: praesident@schaeferhunde.de

President

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Dear Friends of the German Shepherd Dog:

In the course of the past couple of decades, mechanisms and procedures in terms of both shows and examinations have become common practice that are to be considered detrimental to our cause and public image – and this point of view does not only apply to external parties but also to our very own members and representatives.

Therefore, corrective action is more than required.

The Area of Breed Shows

For decades the problem of the German Shepherd Dogs height has been discussed without ever seeking a practical and serious solution to the issue pending. The very first real approach was made on the occasion of the BSZ conformation show in 2015 where participants had a chance to have their dogs' measurements taken – however on a voluntary basis. During the general annual assembly of the SV in May 2016 the so-called Breed Plan for Height was approved of by the delegates and will from now on be strictly implemented. The breed value is legally binding and will from now on be firmly implemented, too. Sanctions will be imposed on those dogs who considerably and clearly exceed the limits that have been determined. The [Breed Plan for Height](#) will be uncompromisingly put into practice and will have a direct effect on the placement that a dog can obtain at the BSZ conformation show.

The requirements according to the Breed Plan for Height do – and that goes without saying – apply for all events and competitions as scheduled and organized within the SV and the WUSV and thus the practical application is mandatory.

A second big problem is the sloping back line of the German Shepherd Dog which is abused to present our breed in a false light by lay people and the media lacking professional respectively cynological background knowledge. Many of us do surely still remember the events that took place at the CRUFTS Show in Birmingham in spring earlier this year. Due to an exceptional set of unfortunate circumstances but in part also intentionally with disregard to a scientific and journalistic code of conduct our breed was publicly discredited. Scientific works as published for instance by the university clinic of Gießen were quoted wrongly and out of context obviously with the intention to stagily bring our breed into disrepute. In a completely unjustified fashion our breed was associated with so-called torture- and aggression breeding.

The criticism that is reiterated time and time again is the so-called sloping back line which is associated with all kinds of disease patterns and diagnosis such as hip dysplasia. I am an orthopedic surgeon myself and well familiar with the common specialized literature. And thus I dare say that those associations are fundamentally wrong and scientifically completely unfounded. Unfortunately, the term “downhill dog” has become that engrained into the minds of lay people in terms of cynological terminology that corrective action is more than mandatory in order to once again establish a more objective public view with the aim to improve our breed’s image again.

A very simple way to cope with that imminent problem would be that dogs may no longer be touched and have to be allowed to stand unsupported and not being forced into the “downhill position” during the judgement in show stance. The same applies for the exercise of free gait while the dogs pause.

If we allow our dogs to stand in a natural position and refrain from manipulatively pulling their hind legs into an unnatural position, we could already prove those arguments raised against our breed wrong.

Another aspect that needs to be considered in this respect is the so-called “instable hind leg” or more precisely worded the excessive angulation of the rear extremity (limb) which is basically caused by a disproportionate growth between the upper and lower thigh on the one hand and in relation to the forehand on the other hand. We need to fight those excesses and to strictly apply sanctions on this disfiguring and performance reducing behavior.

In the future to come only pictures and photos may be approved of and published – particularly regarding the BSZ conformation show – if the requirements as pointed out above will be met accordingly. In consideration of the habits and customs that developed among our “clientele” in terms of that appearance they became so familiar with I am sure we will have to face considerable challenges and also problems which need to be addressed and tackled accordingly.

Another distortion of competition is based on the fact that people have become familiar with a rather untypical kind of gait of our dogs – namely the fast or better said racing trot- during the decisive phase of the judgement of a particular class of our dogs. Apart from the sensational effect that this kind of gait has on our spectators it is of no cynologic relevance at all and is even counterproductive. The attention required and the presentation of the dog can be much better judged while exercising the other kinds of gaits. The German Shepherd Dog was made for medium trot. Everybody who ever seriously studied the field of kinematics is familiar with those facts. The procedure as described above has become very common by now and supports a distortion of competition to the benefit of those participants of shows and competitions who focus on the training of dogs in “irrational fields and ways” with the help of accordingly professionalized handlers. This entails a totally unacceptable and dissuasive discrimination and thus discouragement of “regular competitors”.

Therefore, it is mandatory that the exercise of gait with a slack leash and off the leash has to be carried out at a speed that can be coped with by every respectively normal handler.

Area of Trials and Exams

The implementation of the Protection of Animals Act and the examination regulations as issued by the VDH umbrella organization in Germany (2014 preamble of the SV for trials and competition) still seem to be subject to discussion. This discussion once again was sparked to life when a trade journal showed the incumbent winner of the WUSV championship in 2015 posing on its cover holding a device used for training purposes in her hand that is forbidden under German law.

Apart from the aspects of animal rights and ethics which of course enjoy highest priority we also need to consider a harmonization of regulations at an international level in order to

avoid a distortion of competition given that the individual member countries within the WUSV all have a different kind of legislation.

The common aim has to be that the SV and WUSV implement and comply with the German regulations, laws and statutes since those rules and standards are also part of the WUSV statutes and thus apply for all member organizations. Evidence of training methods that are not species-appropriate or violate the animal protection act have to be strictly sanctioned. However, I am aware of the problems in terms of a justiciable realization of the above mentioned.

It will be a future challenge and work order of the respective task forces and committees to provide possible solutions and approaches in order to objectify these issues still pending.

Responsibility of the Judges (within the SV and the WUSV)

The work of the SV-judges is one of the main pillars of the work of our association because that is the only way to ensure the further development of the breed in terms of anatomic, performance, and temperament related fields. Therefore, a judge has to exclusively adhere to the stipulations and statutes of the association.

For that reason, the board of directors expects the judges appointed for main competitions and events to sign a letter of commitment to ensure that the above mentioned is complied with. The content of the letter of commitment is self-explanatory, and based on the breed standard, the breed- and examination regulations as well as on the requirements of the ethic regulations (as announced on the occasion of the conference of show judges on December 06, 2015 in Lahnstein/ Germany), and last not but not least it is based on the general responsibilities of the judges towards our breed.

The [letter of commitment](#) will be attached to this release and applies to all office bearers and judges, regardless whether within the SV or the WUSV.

And we do take it for granted that every member of the judge corps within the SV and within the member countries of the WUSV will consider this letter of commitment binding and mandatory without being personally addressed.

We will dedicate all our efforts towards the consequent implementation and further development of this aim and appreciate your support.

With kind wishes,



Professor Dr. med. Heinrich Meßler
President to the WUSV