

The SV Zeitung's Editorial Message from the President: April 2016

Dear Readers,

Under the Breed Standard one understands the sum of fixed breed characteristics in domestic animal breeding. It is the norm, therefore the guideline, for the ideal picture of the breed. Out of this, come the resulting grading for individual animals at the so called Breed Shows, and finally the selection, that is, the recommendations for breeding. In Standard Nr. 166 of the 23.3.2010, the characteristics of the German Shepherd Dog are described. The standard covers ca.10 DIN-A4 Pages; it ensues the meticulous depiction of even the smallest details, the observations of the character is limited to a few lines:

The German Shepherd Dog must be of well balanced temperament, steady of nerve, self assured, absolutely at ease (except when provoked) and good natured as well as attentive and easy to train. He must possess instinctive drive, resilience and self confidence in order to be suitable as a companion, watch dog, protection, service and herding dog.

In the founding years the standards served to secure and maintain the performance in every (working dog) breed. During the course of the last century it came to the general development, that many breeds were no longer required for their original working tasks. That is the case specifically for the German Shepherd Dog. The function of our dog shifted from that of a Shepherd Dog around 1900, over the watchdog, protection, and working dog until towards of the end of the last century, to that of a sports and family dog of the present. The development of society has also contributed to the fact that there came the split into "performance" and "show". It is part of canine general knowledge, that with one-sided fixation on phenotypical characteristics to the guidelines of the standard, problems may arise. This is so on the one hand for health issues, on the other hand in respect to over-typification. (Exaggeration). In this phenomenon the original breed picture is lost in favour of the pronounced individual characteristics. During this, the typical character of a breed can get lost. At present, I think herewith of phenomena such as over size, unnatural sloping topline, and instability of the hindquarter. The "at ease" except when provoked, as defined in the standard, is certainly to be questioned in the one or another of the "working dogs". At this point I refer explicitly to the fact that it is the legacy of the Founder Of The Breed, that the German Shepherd Dog is a Working Dog, otherwise it is not a German Shepherd Dog. As President, I am confronted with the situation that here for around 30 years there is an unmistakable development in the direction of the split in the breed. With careful analysis one finds in surprise, that at least the top animals of the sub population no longer have common ancestors for eight to twelve generations. If we therefore have two sub populations, the question arises, if our breed still corresponds to the original performance oriented appearance and character profile. Have we interpreted the Standard too subjectively or even departed from it?

Daily I am confronted with phone calls in which potential members and puppy buyers ask, which dog they now actually have before them. Which German Shepherd Dog is a German Shepherd Dog? My brother had already addressed this problem around 15 years ago. Unfortunately the project "Universal Dog" has failed. I too have very little hope that in

the prevailing collective camp thinking any attempts at approaches are to be expected. So called "intermediates" at most delight the friends of our breed, but definitely not the protagonists.

For the future of our breed it would be helpful, if the guiding force of the individual strains were less ideological, instead becoming active in the sense of Rittmeister von Stephanitz. At this time it seems imperative and necessary that the individual groups that have drifted apart, accept and support one another by standing together for their combined interests. One way towards this direction, would also be to seriously think about the one, and only Standard for our unique Shepherd Dog.

Your

Signed

Heinrich Meßler

Int. HGR