

## Editorial



Dear reader,

You may recall from the recent “All roads lead to Rome” editorial that I commented on character judgment and the accompanying framework conditions on approval for breeding being in desperate need of implementation. The unanimous decision to introduce this concept was adopted at the Federal Convention in May 2014, hence the launch of the core Character Judgment team to set the wheels in motion. This team was able to deliver useful results that could be brought into play in the short term, and we would like to express our sincere thanks to all those involved for their hard work and commitment.

Plans for the Federal Convention in May 2017 suggest that it is set to approve the obligatory introduction of assessments in connection with the implementation of breeding examinations (ZAP). I have been involved in various, somewhat critical conversations, in which it has been suggested that the introduction of character judgments and ZAP will only impose an additional burden on dogs and owners alike. In each of these cases, members of the core group, pre-appointed character judges, and even my own humble self have been able to turn critics into advocates of this reform, which is certain to become essential to all of us. That said, however, it is clear that there is still much more information that could be provided in this regard;

after all, even the standard for our breed includes just five lines on its character traits.

*Nature: In terms of their natural traits, German Shepherds must be even-tempered, steady, confident, entirely impartial, and (away from distractions) good-natured, which includes being attentive and easy to handle. They must be instinctive, resilient, and self-assured if they are to be suitable as dogs for companionship, guarding, protection, service and herding.*

The first sentence defines the behavioral traits expected of a family dog in today’s society, whereas the second refers to the indispensable prerequisites for our breed as a working dog. By introducing character judgments and ZAP, we are seeking to establish a specific control to monitor and objectify our breed’s mental characteristics for the very first time. After all, it is only through strict adherence to the specifications of the standard that we will be able to maintain and improve the status of our breed based on high quality criteria.

From my point of view, there are three considerations that are particularly important in this regard:

1. In the case of consistent demands on the quality of our dogs, the formal prerequisites for handlers shall no longer be defined based on points, but rather on a descriptive basis with reliability ratings. This gives us the opportunity to scientifically evaluate mental characteristics in future generations.
2. The response to our project is becoming increasingly positive across the globe. Within the WUSV, plans are underway to gradually introduce our concept or similar ones as the basis for breeding approval worldwide.
3. Character judgment is available for all German Shepherds, irrespective of their owners’ member status. It goes without saying that it calls for early socialization of our dogs, which has a significant positive public impact.

On pages 18 to 21 of this edition, you will find a detailed portrayal of character judgment and the planned ZAP, which – to the best of my knowledge – addresses any outstanding questions on these matters. I would like to thank the author, Lothar Quoll, for putting together this successful summary as it provides every German Shepherd fan with the opportunity to get to grips with this complex issue that is so important to us all. As a firm believer that this innovation represents a huge step forward for our breed, I would like to ask you all to implement this course of action and help spread the word.

Best wishes,

Prof. Heinrich Meßler  
SV President



The cover photo for this edition features Balu the German Shepherd in a simulated rescue attempt in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Photo: Peter Kneffel/dpa