

German Shorthaired Pointers in Agility

If you want some excitement with your GSP, agility is a dog sport you should consider. The shorthair's natural athleticism and speed make them an exhilarating breed to run. Watching a well conditioned shorthair soar over a jump, with muscles rippling is a sight to behold. And when you are running with the dog, as a team, with well trained co-operation, it gives you such a "buzz" ... you realise why the sport of agility is becoming so popular.

And yet, not that many GSP's are involved in agility. I am not sure why. They are certainly very good at it. This year a Shorthair, Brenilly Wild Wind ADM JDM, won the Balder Trophy for the NSW Agility Dog of the Year point score – this point score includes 15 trials over a full year. Last year another Shorthair, Fenrik Never Say Never ADM, JDM, CDX, FDX, ET was runner up – beaten by just one point!

The breed's natural athleticism means they learn to do the obstacles quickly – jumps are a breeze, the scramble is not an issue, weavers are a challenge taken up with full enthusiasm and tunnels are just great fun. Over enthusiasm can be a problem for the more controlled aspects of agility – down contacts on the dog walk (it can be a temptation to just leap off) and staying on the table (where a shorthair can get a little impatient). But their natural intelligence and desire to please means that with good basic training techniques, these obstacles become an "intellectual challenge" for a breed that loves to think, as well as burn off energy.

There are many clubs throughout Australia that teach agility – some better than others. Contact your canine controlling body and they should be able to help you. Go along to a prospective club and just watch on your first night. See that they are teaching their students how to ensure the dog hits contacts – because if your GSP learns that leaping off the dog walk is fun, it can be difficult to retrain him that staying on is also fun. If you start doing it right from the beginning, then it is easy.

Even if you do not want to compete in agility with your shorthair, it is an excellent way to build a partnership with your dog. Our shorthairs can learn to respond to commands (like "come") even when there is something exciting going on. GSP's enjoy agility training because it is energetic, it is mentally stimulating and it is never boring. Remember, our shorthairs need mental, as well as physical exercise. Agility is the fun way to train a dog.

Le Hammer BVSc

Le has bred, trained and shown German Shorthaired Pointers for over 25 years, and has been involved in agility for over 5 years. With her partner Keith she runs the Canine Fun Sports agility training centre at Castlereagh, near Sydney. Their 4 dogs, Ned, Win, Rabbit and Doc have been successful in teams events as "The Flying Fundogs" as well as their individual successes. It will be over a year before their new dog "Sparkle" will be old enough to compete.



Left to Right
"The Flying fun Dogs"

"Doc" Fenrik Fremantle Doctor
ADX, JDX, AAD AATD

"Ned" Fenrik Never Say Never
ADM, JDM, CDX, FDX, ET. SAAD, AATD.

"Rabbit" Brenilly Winona Ryder
ADM, JDM, SAAD, AATD.

"Winnie" Brenilly Wild Wind
ADM JDM SAAD AATD

