

Reprinted from

Buddy Life Magazine ©

April / June 2011 breed profile.

GET A GRIFFON LIFE!

If you simply want a pet for your family, and don't have the time or inclination to take your dog running or hiking or biking, or to get involved in tracking, or agility (obstacle course), or a similar canine activity, we do not recommend a Wirehaired Pointing Griffon!

"What kind of a dog is that?"

Most human companions of Wirehaired Pointing Griffons have faced this question some time or the other. But it's OK, we've got used to it. These same people, however, may not know that Griffons are excellent family pets and their versatility and eagerness to please helps them to excel in many non-traditional areas.



In fact, Griffons were never intended to be simply household pets. Trying to suppress their "hardwired" desire to run and work, without providing alternate outlets for their energy level, can be difficult.

According to AKC standards, medium sized and bred to cover all terrain encountered by the walking hunter, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon has been called the "4-wheel drive of hunting dogs" as he will enter briars or underbrush without hesitation. Griffs excel equally as pointers in the field and as retrievers in the water. Their coarse double coat protects them in rough cover and gives them an unkempt appearance. It can be a variety of colours, most often steel gray with brown markings. The breed's wiry coat, however, will not develop fully until the dog is about 2-3 years old and is maintained with regular brushing and stripping.

Also known as the Griffon d'arret a poil dur Korthals, Korthals Pointing Griffon, and the Korthals Griffon, the Wirehaired pointing Griffon is an intelligent and affectionate breed. But how do you know whether you are ready to adopt a pet and if this breed is right for you? This information is absolutely necessary in making the decision to adopt a pet.



The origin of the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon can be traced back to 19th century Germany, when a man named Eduard K. Korthals began experimenting with breeds. According to

Korthals' writing of the time, he bred various Griffons, Spaniels, and Retrievers with breeds like the Boerbel and Boulet.

Throughout its history, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon has been most commonly used for hunting game such as water and land birds and small creatures such as raccoons, proving its superior abilities to work while providing companionship.

The first Wirehaired Pointing Griffon was imported into the United States in 1887, and the breed was recognised by the American Kennel Club in 1991. Today, while the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon has attained an underground popularity as a hunting and companion dog, the breed remains rather rare outside of Europe.



Best known for its friendly and calm nature, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon is a genuinely happy breed. These dogs are highly intelligent and generally easy to train. This breed is very territorial and protective of its owner and property. As a pet, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon is obedient, loyal, loving, and affectionate. These dogs enjoy spending time outdoors, swimming, and playing games such as fetch.

Due to its calmness and willingness to learn, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon generally responds well to basic training and commands. This breed is very bright, and has the ability to learn to perform most any task its trainer is willing to take the time to teach. Establishing immediate dominance, trust, and respect is key to successfully training the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon. These dogs respond best to a stern approach by a confident and strong handler.

This rugged, athletic hunting dog has a pleasant disposition, but vigorous daily exercise (jogging, biking, hiking, field work) is high on his list of Things to Do, as is companionship and personal attention. When on the run, this breed is very quick, and may pose a threat to other animals, neighbourhood pets, and small woodland creatures. The Wirehaired Pointing Griffon must be leashed or properly secured at all times when outdoors.

Too much solitary confinement makes him restless and prone to separation anxiety, which he may express by chewing destructively. With strangers, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon tends to be politely aloof. To avoid his caution shading into timidity, he should be accustomed to people and noises at an early age. With other animals, he is usually accepting, though some individuals can be cat chasers.

When properly socialised from a young age, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon gets along well with children and other pets, known for favouring small children. This breed is very

alert and territorial, making an amazing watch and guard dog, announcing the arrival of guests, and willing to do whatever is necessary to protect its owner and property.

The Wirehaired Pointing Griffon is independent and easily distracted, but he is not a dominant dog and is quite responsive to obedience training that includes a calm voice and light hand. He can be a little slow to housebreak and some individuals bark excessively, especially without enough exercise or mental stimulation. Be aware that Wirehaired Pointing Griffons, like all whiskery dog breeds, are not for the fastidious household, as they are sloppy drinkers, their beard soaking up water and depositing it as a trail of drips across your floor.



If you want a dog who...

- * Is medium-sized with an agile, athletic build
- * Has a rough wiry coat and whiskery beard
- * Is rugged in body, pleasant in disposition
- * Is dignified with strangers and congenial with other dogs
- * Responds well to calm training – is not a dominant dog, then A Wirehaired Pointing Griffon may be right for you.

If you don't want to deal with...

- * Vigorous exercise requirements
- * Exuberant jumping, especially when young or not exercised enough
- * "Separation anxiety" (destructiveness and barking) when left alone too much
- * Timidity when not socialised enough
- * A distractable mind of his own – tends to ignore calls and commands when an interesting sight or scent catches his attention

* "Shaggy dog syndrome," i.e. debris clinging to the coat, water soaking into the beard and dripping on your floors

* Slowness to housebreak

* Finding one – very uncommon breed

A Wirehaired Pointing Griffon may not be right for you.



If I was considering a Wirehaired Pointing Griffon, I would be most concerned about...

Providing enough exercise and mental stimulation. Wirehaired Pointing Griffons must have regular opportunities to vent their energy and do interesting things. Otherwise they will become restless and bored, which they usually express by barking and destructive chewing.

Separation anxiety. Wirehaired Pointing Griffons need a great deal of companionship and do not like being left alone for more than a few hours. They tend to express their unhappiness through destructive chewing and barking. If you work all day, this is not the breed for you.

Providing enough socialisation. Standoffish by nature, Wirehaired Pointing Griffons need extensive exposure to people and to unusual sights and sounds. Otherwise their natural caution can become shyness, which is very difficult to live with.

Mind of their own. Wirehaired Pointing Griffons are one of the most responsive of the pointing breeds, but they are not Golden Retrievers. They have an independent mind of their own and are easily distracted by exciting sights, scents, and sounds. You must show them, through absolute consistency and great patience, that you mean what you say and that they must pay attention to you.

"Shaggy dog syndrome." Like all "shaggy" dogs, the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon can be a messy dog. Leaves, mud, snow, fecal matter, and other debris cling to his rough coat. When he drinks, his beard absorbs water, which drips on your floors when he walks away. When he eats, his beard absorbs food, which ends up on your pants when he presses his head against your leg. Rough-coated dogs are not suited to fastidious housekeepers.

Housebreaking. The pointing breeds can be a bit slow to pick this up. Expect several months of consistent crate training.

While the Wirehaired Pointing Griffon is typically known as a healthy and hearty breed, they do suffer from a few health problems, including: hip dysplasia, cataracts, glaucoma,

entropian – folding inward of the eyelid, ectropian – folding outward of the eye lid, and bloat.

Grooming A Griffon

All Griffons benefit from being thoroughly brushed or combed on a regular basis. As Griffons do not spontaneously shed massive amounts of coat (compared to most other breeds), regular brushing is an excellent way to remove dead hair and loose dirt. This is also an opportunity to locate parasites such as ticks, and invasive weeds such as foxtail, before serious damage is done. Although dogs that are being shown are thoroughly groomed on a weekly basis, pets normally need brushing only once or twice per month. To avoid breaking coat unnecessarily, never brush a completely dry coat. A simple misting with a spray bottle of water or a diluted moisturising conditioner or anti-static spray before brushing will eliminate static electricity, which can break coat.

It is important to get down to the skin when brushing or combing. Brushing helps to spread the natural protective oils from the skin throughout the shaft of the hair follicle. take extra care in grooming the facial furnishings, as the re-growth rate is very slow. To maintain full beard and eyebrow furnishings, some people keep these furnishings in a conditioner when not showing. If you don't allow these furnishings to become matted, you will find the classic Griffon look much easier to achieve.

Always thoroughly brush your dog before bathing. Knots or mats, which have been soaked in the bathing process are nearly impossible to remove without seriously damaging the coat. This is particularly important when bathing facial furnishings.

A good quality stainless steel comb and/or pin brush is all you need to brush out a Griffon. A slicker brush does not get down to the skin surface. You may find that a pin brush that does not have balls on the end of the pins, which can catch and break hair, nor one with thick bristles in between the pins, which keep you from being able to get all the way through a dense coat, works best on a Griffon coat.



Now that you know all about the breed, do you think you are ready to own a Wirehaired Pointing Griffon? Remember, adopting a pet is a big decision and should be discussed thoroughly and seriously with your entire family.

GRIFFS' DETAILS

General Appearance

Medium sized, with a noble, square-shaped head, strong of limb, bred to cover all terrain encountered by the walking hunter. Movement showing an easy cat-like gracefulness. Excels equally as a pointer in the field, or a retriever in the water. Coat is hard and coarse, never curly or woolly, with a thick undercoat of fine hair, giving an unkempt appearance. His easy trainability, devotion to family, and friendly temperament endear him to all. The nickname of "supreme gundog" is well earned.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Size – 22 to 24 inches for males, 20 to 22 inches for females. Correct size is important. Oversize to be severely penalised. Proportion – Slightly longer than tall, in a ratio of 10 to 9. Height from withers to ground; length from point of shoulder to point of buttocks. The Griffon must not evolve towards a square conformation. Substance medium, reflecting his work as an all-terrain hunting dog.

Head

The head is to be in proportion to the overall dog. The skull is of medium width with equal length from nose to stop and from stop to occiput. The skull is slightly rounded on top, but from the side the muzzle and head are square. The stop and occiput are only slightly pronounced. The required abundant mustache and eyebrows contribute to the friendly expression. The eyes are large and well open, more rounded than elliptical. They have an alert, friendly, and intelligent expression. Eye color ranges in all shades of yellow and brown. Haws should not show nor should there be protruding eyes. The ears should be of medium size, lying flat and close to the head, set high, at the height of the eye line. Nose–Well open nostrils are essential. Nose color is always brown. Any other color is a disqualification. Bite scissors. Overshot or undershot bite is a serious fault.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck – rather long, slightly arched, no dewlap. Topline – The back is strong and firm, descending in a gentle slope from the slightly higher withers to the base of the tail. The chest must descend to the level of the elbow, with a moderate spring of rib. The chest must neither be too wide nor too narrow, but of medium width to allow freedom of movement. The loin is strong and well developed, being of medium length. The croup and rump are stoutly made with adequate length to favour speed. The tail extends from the back in a

continuation of the topline. It may be carried straight or raised slightly. It is docked by one-third to one-half length.

Forequarters

Shoulders are long, with good angulation, and well laid back. The forelegs are straight and vertical from the front and set well under the shoulder from the side. Pasterns are slightly sloping. Dewclaws should be removed. Feet are round, firm, with tightly closed webbed toes. Pads are thick.

Hindquarters

The thighs are long and well muscled. Angulation in balance with the front. The legs are vertical with the hocks turning neither in nor out. The stifle and hock joints are strong and well angulated. Feet as in front.

Coat

The coat is one of the distinguishing features of the breed. It is a double coat. The outer coat is medium length, straight and wiry, never curly or woolly. The harsh texture provides protection in rough cover. The obligatory undercoat comprises a fine, thick down, which provides insulation as well as water resistance. The undercoat is more or less abundant, depending upon the season, climate, and hormone cycle of the dog. It is usually lighter in colour. The head is furnished with a prominent mustache and eyebrows. These required features are extensions of the undercoat, which gives the Griffon a somewhat untidy appearance. The hair covering the ears is fairly short and soft, mixed with longer harsh hair from the coat. The overall feel is much less wiry than the body. The legs, both front and rear, are covered with denser, shorter, and less coarse hair. The coat on the tail is the same as the body; any type of plume is prohibited. The breed should be exhibited in full body coat, not stripped short in pattern. Trimming and stripping are only allowed around the ears, top of head, cheeks and feet.

Colour

Preferably steel gray with brown markings, frequently chestnut brown, or roan, white and brown; white and orange also acceptable. A uniformly brown coat, all white coat, or white and orange are less desirable. A black coat disqualifies.

Gait

Although close working, the Griffon should cover ground in an efficient, tireless manner. He is a medium-speed dog with perfect coordination between front and rear legs. At a trot, both front and rear legs tend to converge toward the center line of gravity. He shows good

extension both front and rear. Viewed from the side, the topline is firm and parallel to the line of motion. A smooth, powerful ground-covering ability can be seen.

Temperament

The Griffon has a quick and intelligent mind and is easily trained. He is outgoing, shows a tremendous willingness to please and is trustworthy. He makes an excellent family dog as well as a meticulous hunting companion.

Disqualifications

Nose any colour other than brown.

Black coat.

~

** Please note that 'Buddy Life Magazine' is an American publication and therefore certain aspects in the contents of the publication are region specific and may not be the same or relevant here in the United Kingdom.*