

Importing a German Weimaraner

Why buy a German Weimaraner?

By Steve Graham

There are many reasons to import a German Weimaraner. I imported my own dogs because I enjoy the friendship of my German breeder acquaintances, I want the kind of dog the Germans breed for and since I like the longhaired variety, I want to expand the gene pool in the United States.

Although a German Weimaraner has a certain cachet to it, one should think twice about importing a German dog because they are deemed "better."

The Germans definitely do NOT want some of the kinds of dogs that are being bred in North America. The Germans want a hunting dog first and foremost. To the German way of thinking (and by regulation), the most important work a dog does is AFTER the shot, i.e. finding and retrieving shot game.

Because of the German concept of a hunting dog and because of the limited space to hunt, they have little or no use for the type of Weimaraners that win field trials in North America.

To a German, a "hunting dog" is a dog that will find, track and retrieve fur as well as feathered game. Don't expect a German Weimaraner to run and act like some of the little buzz bombs with suspicious pointer-like dished faces that win North American field trials.

Are German Weimaraners "Better?"

The Germans are very careful about breeding. A dog must prove itself in hunting tests administered by the *Jagdgebrauchshund Verband* (JGHV) and pass conformation and temperament tests as well as have hips certified clear of hip dysplasia before even being considered breedable. (This is consistent with other German hunting breeds as well.) Breedings are certified by regional breed wardens who then evaluate the puppies and tattoo the registration number in the left ear. Puppies that have obvious problems are marked "breeding forbidden" and may never be bred.

Regardless of parentage, however, the degree to which a puppy will meet the new owner's hopes and expectations is still a matter of chance.

The chances of success are obviously much higher with the German system than with picking a puppy at random from the multitude of North American breeders (including show breeders) who pump out puppies without regard for the congenital health and hunting ability of the parents.

There are North American breeders who exercise extreme care in health matters and breed for hunting ability, particularly under the program of the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA). Weimaraners have had a slow start in popularity in NAVHDA tests, but participation is increasing.

How Do I Find a German Weimaraner to Import?

The very best way to find a puppy is to visit Germany and the breeders. The problem is not only the cost and time, but many - perhaps most - breeders speak little, if any,

English. (Sure, they study it, but how well do YOU speak whatever language you studied under duress in school?)

The Weimaraner Klub provides a central referral service (*Welpenvermittlung*)

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Unfortunately, I don't believe Herr Möllenberg speaks or reads English.

Buying a German Weimaraner is serious business. By policy, the German club will only deal with inquiries by hunters. Obtaining a hunting license in Germany is serious business, not to mention expensive. Hunters must study game laws, wildlife biology and other subjects as well as passing a comprehensive written examination.

The North American situation is different, of course, but be prepared to talk hunting and dog training with breeders and others.

The other alternative is to peruse web sites by German breeders (in German, but Google translation is good enough) or have somebody in North America put you in touch with somebody in Germany.

Note: Most German breeders plan litters to be born early in the year, i.e. Jan-May, so that they are an optimum age for the German hunting tests (VJP and HZP), which have limits on the age of the dog tested. This means that puppies are usually not available year-around.

Do German breeders discriminate against Americans (or Canadians)?

No, but there are a couple of things to be aware of.

1, The Germans are fanatical about keeping records of a dog's performance and other details. Dogs sent to North America usually are lost to the system either totally or in part. The details of a dog's performance and health become part of the history of the breeder of the dog. Note, however, that it IS possible to test a German-bred dog under the German testing system through clubs in the United States and Canada, e.g. JGV-USA and your breeder will appreciate it.

2. Many breeders have had bad experiences with American military personnel who find they cannot keep a dog and the animal ends up in the German version of a humane society (*Tierheim*).

Given the above, you might have to work extra hard to convince a breeder that you are worthy of a Weimaraner puppy. Note that most breeders have litters once a year or even less often. No German breeder ever makes money on breeding dogs and that's a philosophy enforced by the German club's rules.

German Litters and Kennel Names

German puppies come with their formal names attached. The breeder assigns names of one or two syllables starting with "A" for the first litter, "B" for the second and so forth. The breeder gets a kennel name (*Zwingername*) from the Weimaraner Klub. Breeding is a LOT of work just for the testing and permission. It's easy to see why most German dogs' names start with 'A' and 'B.' Many breeders just get tired of the process.

All puppies have their German registration numbers tattooed in the left ear.

When you receive your puppy, you will also get the registration paper called the *Ahnentafel* (pedigree) that is a combination registration certificate and pedigree. Do not lose it. On the paper, the breeder will sign the puppy over to you and notify the Weimaraner Klub registry of the new owner. Be SURE that it is not stamped "*Zuchtverbot*" (Breeding forbidden).

Note that shipping a puppy is a *lot* of extra work for a breeder. Be sure to be appreciative and cover his/her extra costs.

How do I pay?

Germans are accustomed to paying bills and other debts by direct deposit into the bank account of an individual or company. The breeder will likely provide you with a bank name, bank number and account number to which you can have funds deposited in Euros (€) by your bank in North America. Better still, go to Germany and have Euros in your pocket.

Coming to America

If you're lucky enough to go to Germany to get your pup, you can bring it home in a soft underseat carrier (Sherpa bag) or in a crate in the baggage compartment. BE SURE to check with your airline ahead of time. Most require a reservation for your dog as well as for yourself. (Disposable diapers make fine bedding for a puppy in a soft underseat carrier and you can change them in-flight)

Pet-Air at the Frankfurt/Main airport will ship dogs anywhere in the world. See: <http://www.petair.de/> It's possible to start in other German cities as well. Lufthansa, the German carrier, flies non-stop from Frankfurt to many North American cities. They seem to be more at ease with flying dogs than the North American carriers.

The United States has no quarantine for dogs with proper vaccination certification. (*Der Infpass*). German dogs normally have yellow international forms in three languages signed by the veterinarian that did the immunization. Since rabies is rampant in North America (primarily among forest animals, which you can't do much about), I suppose the feeling is that there's not much point in restricting well-cared-for dogs when the disease is on the loose in the woods. (Hawaii, which has no rabies, does have a quarantine restriction, however). Rabies vaccination is not required in very young puppies.

Passing through the customs and agriculture inspection is normally a quick formality.

How do I register my puppy in North America?

Both the American Kennel Club and the Canadian Kennel Club accept the German registration, but there's a catch:

The AKC will NOT accept the *Ahmentafel* as provided (I don't know about the CKC) The AKC wants to see a document from the German registry certifying you as the owner. The paper you received from the breeder is signed by the breeder and not the registering organization. Therefore, you must either:

- 1, Also register the dog through the *Verband für Deutsche Hundewesen* (VDH), which costs extra (over \$100), takes substantial time and can be handled by the breeder or:
- 2, Obtain a letter on Weimaraner Klub stationery from the breed warden that that you are indeed the registered owner of the puppy. Ask your breeder to request this and have it sent to your home address. The current breed warden doesn't speak or read English. Don't worry about the letter being in German, the AKC will work it out.

Sometimes No. 2 works smoothly and sometimes it doesn't. The AKC seems to be endowed with its share of clueless employees, but eventually they can be made to see the light. (As an aside, one friend had the AKC completely lose the foreign registration application for his longhaired Weimaraner for an extended period)

The application for registering a foreign-born dog is available from the AKC or CKC as appropriate. Note that the CKC is notoriously slow in just about everything they do.

If you wish to test your dog in NAVHDA (which I encourage), you must register it with them as well. NAVHDA will accept the original *Ahmentafel* without a problem. See www.navhda.org.

Hip X-Rays

Among the papers that you will receive is an application for him X-Ray evaluation. The last time, I got a puppy, the Weimaraner Klub paid for the hip evaluation by the designated canine radiologist in Germany. Even if you do not intend to breed your dog, please do your breeder and the breed a favor by having an X-Ray taken between the first and second birthdays and send it back to the address provided in Germany.

Good luck and *Waidmannsheil!*

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