

WUSV Working Group of Great Britain

Draft Response to items 7.2 and 7.3 from the WUSV AGM September 2018 (deferred from agenda pending feedback from member clubs)

Executive Summary

The two member clubs in the UK support in principle the concept of breed harmonisation across the World – of setting standards towards which all clubs can aspire and eventually achieve.

We agree that identification, DNA, health tests, welfare, character, working ability and adherence to the breed standard for conformation are all intrinsic and essential objectives of such a harmonisation programme.

However, we believe that if the harmonisation programme is to be successful then it must allow for national differences in approach without compromising the key objectives. Items 7.2 (Breeding guidelines) and 7.3 (Show guidelines) clearly adopt the guidelines in operation by the SV in Germany. It is important to understand that “one size” does not fit all.

The GSDL and BAGSD believe that the following adjustments are required to allow the breed harmonisation to be embraced on a significant and meaningful scale:

- Breeding
 - Acceptance that the Kennel Club (KC) registration systems meet the basic requirements for recording of pedigree German Shepherds, the maintenance of a stud book and the control of kennel names.
 - Acceptance that there will always be a significant number of breeders who do not participate in IPO and they should not be excluded from WUSV activities in the UK
 - Acceptance of qualifications taken in the UK under SV Ausland and SV Special Judges for Koerung taken in the UK. (character assessments, BH, AD, IPO and show grades)
- Breed Shows
 - Puppy classes to be permitted from 4 months.
 - Recognition by the SV of character assessments taken in the UK
 - Maintenance of the adult class and the availability of V grading in that class.
 - Acceptance of a UK breed survey for adult classes at breed shows, including the use of UK systems for health testing and DNA recording eg BVA/KC Hip and Elbow Scoring.

The detailed explanation of these adjustments is provided below. There are other aspects of items 7.2 and 7.3 which are currently not in place in the UK and would require phasing in over time but are not considered to be fundamentally unacceptable and so have not been included in this document.

Background.

In the UK, all pedigree puppy registrations are processed by The Kennel Club (KC). As a registration service, they do a good job. The KC is a very wealthy organisation which has very high recognition amongst the general public. "KC registered" is the standard which is generally accepted in the UK for pedigree puppies and sought by puppy buyers.

The two WUSV Member clubs in the UK: GSD League of GB (GSDL) and British Association for GSDs (BAGSD) are registered societies with the KC.

Approximately 7,000 GSD puppies are registered every year in the UK by the KC. We estimate that possibly 500 - 1000 of these puppies are bred by breeders who are members of GSDL or BAGSD. The remaining puppies being bred by "pet" owners and puppy traders with varying attention to the objectives of the breeding guidelines. For the purposes of this document, we will refer to those breeders who are already engaged with the WUSV through GSDL and BAGSD as "specialist breeders" and those who are not as "amateur breeders" – clearly a simplification but to assist with clarity of the document.

The GSDL has, since 2010, successfully introduced shows under adapted SV / WUSV rules. Like all countries, attendance at these shows can be variable usually between 70 and 120 entrants. The British Sieger is run jointly by the GSDL, BAGSD and the British GSD Breed Council (BC) and entries are usually around 250.

The KC also license the running of conformation shows in the UK to their own rules which do not require any identification, health testing or working qualifications. They do, however, offer an alternative to owners, who enjoy the social and competitive side of showing, without having to meet prescribed criteria on health and working ability.

Specialist breeders in the UK fall into three broad categories: 1) those who embrace the principles of identification, health and character using the systems in place in the UK and do not aspire to switch to SV systems but are working for the good of the breed in a meaningful way and form the majority group, 2) those who aspire to embrace the SV systems and are at varying stages of doing so but may not engage in IPO due to limited access to the sport or fundamental disagreement with the sport and 3) those who fully embrace the SV system including IPO and koerung. It is important that GSDL and BAGSD support all of these groups to work in the best interest of the breed as well as endeavour to encourage "amateur breeders" to embrace the principles of the breed harmonisation programme.

It is important to understand these factors to understand the approach which we are proposing to the harmonisation programme in the UK.

Breeding Regulations:

Registration of GSDs

GSDL and BAGSD are not currently in a position to enforce breeding guidelines given that the KC is the national registration body. If this becomes an obligation of WUSV membership we will not be able to comply. We also think that it would not be in the best interest of the breed in our country to attempt to set up an alternative registration system to the KC.

We propose the following to address the desirable objective of positively influencing breeding of GSDs in the UK:

- The WUSV, GSDL and BAGSD work together to persuade the KC to adopt the principles of the breed harmonisation within its registration criteria. It is vital that the WUSV involve the GSDL and BAGSD in this consultation as we are the experts on how the system currently works and the needs of UK breeders.
- Introduce a quality assurance programme to endorse KC pedigrees which meet the agreed criteria and market this programme to the general public so that it becomes as sought after as “KC registered”.

The KC does generally enforce some breeding restrictions in terms of the minimum age of a dog to be used at stud, minimum and maximum age for a bitch to have puppies, maximum number of litters that a bitch can have in her lifetime, restricted in-breeding, AI and maximum number of caesarean section births. However, health tests are not mandatory and even for a KC “assured breeder” – whilst hip x-rays are mandatory and elbow x-rays are recommended – there is no restriction on breeding from tested animals regardless of the outcome of those tests.

The main arguments put forward by the KC against introducing minimum health test requirements are that a) anything they introduce sets a precedent for all breeds which they register not just GSDs and b) any cut-off point would be arbitrary and potentially harmful to the gene pool in numerically small breeds.

Breed Wardens

As mentioned above, the GSDL and BAGSD are not able to enforce breeding restrictions through the registration system. It is unlikely that the KC would introduce a breed survey or koerung as a criteria for breeding but again, this is something which the WUSV, GSDL and BAGSD could set as an objective to discuss with the KC.

Currently there are two types of breed survey which are operational in the UK.... A UK breed survey which is operated by the GSD Breed Council (a body which brings together and represents some KC registered GSD societies) and SV koerungs.

For those “specialist breeders” mentioned in category 3 above who already pursue all SV qualifications, there is no point at all in introducing a UK “equivalent” as it would not be “equivalent” on an international basis and breeders in this category wish to attain the highest level of international qualification which is the SV koerung. We recommend that we keep the current situation which entails inviting SV koermeister to the UK and carrying out SV koerungs. It should be noted that it is vital that UK judges with SV Ausland or Special National status are able to award qualifications in character assessments, show grades, AD, BH and IPO which is recognised by the SV for the purpose of a koerung taken in the UK.

Most “specialist breeders” in category 1 and 2 above are unlikely to wish to pursue an SV koerung but could still fulfil the criteria of a koerung “with a UK flavour” ie using BVA hip and elbow scores and obtaining their qualifications under UK qualified judges. It would be preferable for such a koerung to have two tiers – without IPO and with IPO. A character assessment would be widely accepted as a criteria but the UK does not have the infrastructure for widespread participation in IPO and so it is important that for the foreseeable future that recognition of the value of animals that do not have IPO qualifications is maintained.

It would probably not be desirable to set up a system in opposition to the GSD Breed Council breed survey but development of that system could be a solution. However, this system is not under the control of GSDL or BAGSD and so we can have little influence over its development and cannot control any elements of it which we consider to be undesirable or influence the training of

surveyors. Ideally the GSDL and BAGSD would take over responsibility for the UK breed survey from the GSD Breed Council but this would be a very controversial proposal.

Guidelines for Holding a Breed Show

Here we only consider shows held under WUSV rules as we consider KC show regulations to be a completely separate matter.

It is very important to understand the scale of breed shows in the UK. A very well attended breed show will attract 250 – 300 entries and this is mainly limited to The British Sieger and Crufts. Most breed shows are pleased with an entry of over 100 and shows with less than 50 entries are common. At any point in time there are probably circa 500 - 750 German Shepherds being actively shown.

Small entries at shows is one factor in the decline of breed shows over recent years and is a vicious circle where exhibitors don't enter because shows with small numbers are not interesting and so numbers decline further and so on. Running a breed show with less than 100 entries in the UK where very few clubs have their own venues is an economic challenge.

It is vital therefore, that breed show guidelines are inclusive to encourage entries without compromising the basic principles of health, identification and character.

It is normal in the UK for puppies to be shown from the age of 4 months onwards and such exhibits probably account for approximately 1/3 of entries at every show. It is important that breed shows continue to include puppy classes.

Character Assessments

The GSDL and BAGSD are fully supportive of character assessments and, as with koerungs, see no point in developing a separate assessment to that of the SV. We are happy to introduce the character assessment as a requirement for the working class.

HOWEVER, this cannot be done until we can run SV character assessments in the UK in the same way as we do SV Koerungs – with SV approved assessors. In order to do that we need acceptance by the SV of character assessments carried out in the UK. Additionally, we need UK assessors to be approved by the SV in order for the holding of character assessments to be economically viable.

Gradings

As stated before, it is vital to recognise UK breeders and exhibitors who do not participate in IPO and who utilise the established and very credible health testing and identification systems in the UK. It is therefore vital that we maintain an adult (open) class.

It is also vital that exhibits in the adult class can attain the grading of Excellent. UK exhibitors accept that when such gradings are recorded by the SV they are converted to SG.

The adult classes are the most numerous in the UK and many exhibitors will not enter them if they feel that their dog is considered to be inferior to those in the working classes – it must be remembered that the infrastructure does not exist in the UK for all dogs to participate in the UK.

Penalising exhibits which are outside of height limits by 1cm would seem to be excessively punitive currently and would require consistent application by judges to have any impact on breeding over time.

Breeding Bans

Clearly from the explanation of the KC's control of breeding registers it can be seen that GSDL of GB and BAGSD are unable to impose breeding bans.