

The BIG Decision: Choosing A Puppy

In this issue I am very excited to discuss the topic of puppies. I am a sucker for the little paws, floppy ears and wagging tail of a puppy, but most of all a puppy is the beginning of your best hunting dog! In the next few months I myself will be acquiring my next hunting prospect. I have chosen to go with a Deutsch Drahthaar. I have had several people ask me why I chose this breed of dog and that brings me to the topic of this article.

Every person will have different wants and needs from their puppy. In this article I will use myself as an example on choosing the right breed/puppy based on your needs and wants. I currently have two Dachshunds I use for tracking and could not be happier with their performance. I have also run into a few issues that lead me in to choosing a larger dog to add to my tracking team. In North Carolina we deal with several poisonous snakes. The snakes are not too big of a problem until you head more towards the Eastern part of the state. This is where I ran in to my first problem. We hunt in an area with copperheads, rattlesnakes, cottonmouths and coral snakes. Not a good situation for any dog much less a dog with 4" legs! Larger dogs stand a much better chance of survival if bitten because of their size. My next issue is the heat we deal with in early archery season. Because dogs do not sweat they are prone to overheating. Again larger dogs tolerate heat better than a smaller dog but all precautions should be taken while working your puppy/dog in warm weather. My last problem is terrain. My Dachshunds do awesome when tracking in Central North Carolina and even the Western part of the state is ideal because of the hardwoods, fields and thickets. But in the Eastern part of the state you start to run in to swamps, lowlands and very dense undergrowth. I personally felt that a Deutsch Drahthaar is much more suited to this type of terrain due to their long legs, swimming ability and all around genetic makeup.

Environment and terrain were very important when choosing the needs for my next tracking prospect but in the Drahthaar breed my wants were also covered such as the dogs appearance, ability to point and retrieve for bird hunting and the energy level of these dogs is high. The following is a quick guideline to consider when choosing your pup.

1. Intelligence
2. Hunting/Tracking Desire
3. Scent Ability
4. Trainability
5. Courage
6. Physical Strength
7. Genetic Background

Try to choose a breeder who keeps track of the puppy's personalities as they grow. This will allow you to ask questions to help pick the pup that best suits you. Make a list of the wants and needs from your next hunting prospect and try to match a breed of dog to your list based on breed characteristics. You would definitely not want a high energy retrieving breed if you live in an apartment, care nothing for retrieving sports and want a pal to kick back and watch TV with after hunting. You will be in for a rude awakening!

In summary be sure to evaluate your lifestyle and what you will require and want from your next hunting dog. Take your time to research several breeds that suit you along with quality breeders for your final breed choice. Most breeds will have a group or club that you can contact to get information from and these can also be very helpful when training your new puppy. A puppy is the beginning of many hunting stories to come – choose wisely!

Happy Hunting, Happy Tracking and Best of Luck for All!