

ZAP Assessment

The information below has been generously shared with our association by the G.S.D.C.V. – Our grateful thanks go to their webmaster, Jacinta Poole for her work.



Lehrfilm zur Wesensüberprüfung im Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SV) e.V.

Watch the ZAP Puppy Test Video (above)

The GSDCA will implement the ZAP Character Test as part of the WUSV Harmonisation program that member clubs have approved. Below is an extract from the SV (German) website regarding the introduction of the character assessment in Germany.

The ZAP Test conducted by the GSDCA is for animals 9months to 8 years of age.

The manual for the GSDCA ZAP Character test can be downloaded [here](#)

A question of character – ZAP Test

Breeding pedigree dogs is essential for meeting society's needs for service dogs, working dogs, sporting dogs or simply a four-legged family companion. Pedigree dogs are branded goods that are characterised by their unmistakable "breed-specific" features.

The character or nature is a feature set out in the German Shepherd standard, which is used to characterise the product as "typical" while taking many other factors into consideration. The assertions and requirements covered by the character judgment are principally designed to prove the dogs are environmentally sound and socially friendly. But they are also drawn upon as an additional examination for our working dog requirements. The character judgment includes determining a dog's behavioural traits that manifest themselves on the basis of hereditary assets subject to the available breeding, development and posture qualities.

What happens in a character judgement?

As part of a character judgment, a dog's behaviour and its flexibility is recorded by confronting them with different stimuli that may trigger or provoke a particular behaviour. A conclusion can be drawn on the dog's nature based on their behaviour throughout the entire assessment, with the aim of checking

the dog's suitability for living with humans in today's world as objectively as possible. The dog should not be handled in obedience. Commands must be kept to the very minimum. For this reason, performance examinations (BH, IPO, etc.) that predominantly test learned and conditioned behaviour are no substitute for character judgments. Character judgments are split into the following categories:

Impartiality: The dog should allow their handler and an unknown person, e.g. the judge, to touch them at different points on the body.

Social behaviour: Interaction with people, individuals, groups

Noise sensitivity: In this section, the dog is subjected to different acoustic stimuli, e.g. rattling, engine noise and blanks being fired as the loudest stimulus.

Certainty of movement: Sensitivity to heights (e.g. assessed by looking at a dog's movement behaviour across tables) as well as a dog's movement on flat ground.

Play and predatory instinct/behaviour under stress: The assessment is based on how the dog plays with their owner (teamwork) and with an unknown person (representative). Furthermore, the intensity towards obstructed prey (willingness to find) and their willingness to play under increased demands (moving table) are also assessed. Only a dog that feels comfortable in its environment and can cope with the situation is able to play.

Basic nature: Behaviour in isolation and when meeting an unknown person.

What happens during the assessment?

The dog is assessed in two ways: based on the specific evaluation of each behaviour trait (descriptive) and based on reliability ratings. Not only are the dog's reactions crucial here, but also how the dog manages the individual situations and using which coping strategies. If the dog becomes visibly overstressed, the assessment is stopped so that the dog is not harmed indefinitely.

General grounds for exclusion include character deficiencies that are also stipulated in our breed standard. This affects dogs that are very anxious, aggressive dogs that show increased aggression in peaceful situations, as well as dogs that are sensitive to shots being fired. The description makes it easier for the dog owner and other persons involved to follow the results of the character judgment. By awarding reliability ratings, it is possible to add more weighting to more significant behavioural situations. Furthermore, the reliability ratings make it possible to gather statistics and monitor the character judgments more closely.

What are the implementation provisions?

Dogs aged between 9 months and 8 years are permitted for entry. While the assessment is being taken voluntarily (until BV May 2017), dogs that do not fit in this time-window can also be entered. For cases where a dog has not been entered for a character judgment at the right age with good reason, it is planned that they can subsequently be entered for a character judgment, regardless of age (re-entrant). This also applies to dogs bred abroad or dogs acquired when they are older who are then destined to be used for breeding in Germany. In both cases, a five-month waiting period automatically comes into force between passing the character judgment and the work element of the ZAP (similar to initially entering breeding programs aged between 13 and 18 months).

Once the character judgment and ZAP have been passed, the dog must pass the breeding survey before they can be used for breeding without restriction. In the event of a negative result, the character judgment can be repeated once. It will be noted in the assessment documentation if a dog is repeating the assessment. A report will be drawn up for each assessed dog, which will then be given to the owner. The data sheet lists information about the age of the subject, gender, condition, husbandry conditions and future intended use. The character judgment is listed on the pedigree and the dog's owner receives a certificate and completed assessment sheets. The assessments achieved are published in SV-DOxS. As with the breeding program, the society has made the "SV character judgment" program available to event organizers.

What does ZAP stand for?

Zuchtanlageprüfung (ZAP) – Rating of mental and physical breeding disposition

Source: <https://www.schaeferhunde.de/en/the-german-shepherd/character-judgment/>

Watch the SV ZAP Puppy Test Video: Educational film for the examination of the German Shepherd Dog Association (SV) e.V. which can be viewed below

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Z8mEQ_qqjs&feature=youtu.be