

## **GSD Breed Improvement - The ZAP Character Assessment Report 2024**

The GSDCA has implemented the ZAP Character Test, a worldwide recognized aspect of the WUSV Breed Improvement Scheme for the dedicated breeder of the German Shepherd Dog. The GSDA of WA's Inauguration of the ZAP: 28/5/2023 Further dates: 11/8/24 & 20.10.24

It is with great pleasure, that I present to you, an overview of the 3 GSDCA ZAP Character Test conducted on our Club Grounds since its inauguration in 2023. Since its adoption by the GSDCA, there have been regular ZAP Demonstrations in all States of our vast country. Here in WA, they were always well received, engendering enthusiasm for the implementation of the ZAP as part of the WUSV Harmonisation Programme.

Let me give you a little background on the concept and vitally important reasons, why the ZAP in its entirety, ZAP 1 being the Character Test, that GSDCA has accepted and adapted to our special conditions in Australia, is now considered a vitally important aspect of German Shepherd Dog Breeding not only in Germany, but right through the WUSV, the World Union of German Shepherd Dog Associations, since its inception in May 2014.

The GSDCA has been a proud member of the WUSV for decades, enabling us to be part of the worldwide movement of promoting, improving and protecting the breed. We have all grown up with the concept or heard about it time and again: The German Shepherd Dog is a Working Dog! So, it was declared by the Founder of the Breed, Rittmeister, that is Cavalry Officer, Max von Stephanitz. YES! From the very beginning, the breeding of the GSD meant the promotion of the right aspects, the conformation and character enabling this very special breed of dog to meet and fulfil the role of Working Dog. Over the decades many breed improvement schemes were developed. The best known, to combat HD, and the "a" stamp had to be part of, and cemented for generations in every German Shepherd's pedigree in Germany, and so documented good hips were worked on, and bred for, all over the world!

Proud to be Australian? You well might be! The GSDCA had implemented their Elbow Scheme, now promoting the GSD with the A and Z stamp, well before the breed's motherland, Germany, had implemented their ED scheme. The German Pedigree shows the all-important results on the pedigree, stamped "a" and "ED" giving the required details.

Many of us recall the difficult times of GSDCA promoting Breed Survey as the ideal for breeding. Codes of Ethic were amended, all over Australia, all on a voluntary basis, to adhere to this concept. Breeders presenting litters bred from Breed Survey Classified parents were able to enter their litters on the Club's Puppy Listing! Breed Surveyed males were proudly shown on the Club Stud Dog Registers. The next step in breed improvement led to requiring dogs to have gained the A and Z stamps prior to Breed Survey! As guardians of the breed, these aspects of Breed Improvement were recognized by breeders on a worldwide basis and promoted to the best of their ability.

Our GSDCA affiliated Club members all over Australia, will travel interstate, for us, that means "Over East" to exhibit at The National in Show and Performance Sports, fly over to State Breed Exhibitions, and other major shows. Some of our members have been keen spectators also at various interstate club's ZAP Character Tests, and here finally, I have come to the gist of my presented with a fair account of the background, ZAP Character Test Report!

We all know that the WUSV demands, and we, Australia, have been granted a lot of leeway, that all breeders and GSD owners promote the Working Dog aspect of our breed. We see the SchH far back in the pedigree, and IGP in the first few generations. We know our breed's strength lies in the principles of soundness of body and mind. Our dogs' forbears may well be world beating VA dogs, some gaining their VA in many WUSV countries, and ALL were all trained in Obedience, all trained in Tracking, and all trained in Protection Work! We will soon be looking for and see more and more come in with the ZAP listed on their Pedigree! We know that the ANKC does not sanction any Protection work, one aspect of the complete, at first

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German, then International concept of formerly SchH, now IGP, the International Working Test, encompassing Obedience, Tracking and Protection Work.

Our Australian bred GSDS also show a proud ancestry of Champions and performance titled dogs. As each member club of the GSDCA, is affiliated to their own State Kennel Council, for us, that is Dogs West, which is a part of the ANKC, the Australian National Kennel Council, our members are deeply involved, as German Shepherd Dog owners, in responsible breeding, raising and keeping of the GSD. So many of our fraternity are actively involved in training for several of the exhibitions and competitions that are part and parcel of responsible dog ownership and working towards the improvement and betterment of our chosen breed. This covers all of the breed that our Association is devoted to, from dazzling champions to beloved family pets. And never forget the many in our midst, who are also doing their best for the breed, by adopting, loving and training, a rescue dog.

We have been aware of the difficulties awaiting us all, with new dog legislation, new Government clauses, changes to the Dog Act looming as a constant threat to all of the dog fraternity. Many of us have signed the petitions and kept a watchful eye on what may await us.

The SV, and thereafter the WUSV has enabled those who wish to be active in GSD Breeding in the homeland of the breed, and in all WUSV affiliated Clubs Worldwide, to continue breeding the German Shepherd Dog without the stringent mandatory Breeding Practices, to participate in what they call the alternative way of entering the breeding programme with the ZAP'S 3 Part Working Aspects of the Breeding Potential Test of their just a little less stringent regulations for all aspects of Obedience, Nose work (Track or Search) and Protection. The GSDCA has its own tradition of ANKC Obedience, Tracking, and many other performance tests, none of which are a prerequisite for breeding in Australia. We now embrace the ZAP Character test, also on a voluntary basis!

The **ZUCHTANLAGEPRÜFUNG** is a part of the WUSV Harmonisation Programme.

The ZAP Character Test has become an integral part of ALL German Shepherd Dog breeding throughout the WUSV. A test of; and for breeding potential, the Character Test is showing the young dogs' potential, the aptitude or tendency for exhibiting various responses under test conditions. Responses that are not a result of training, but an expression of the natural raising of a young GSD, simply preparing the youngster for the life of a companion, working, or competition dog. There are many lifestyles awaiting the young puppies as a family pet, show dog, trials or other sport, from one to all!

The natural responses under a certain amount of stress, will be evaluated and documented, recording strengths and aptitudes that will soon enable the breeders with various aims, to make even more informed decisions on the selection of breeding partners for the bitches in their kennels. The dogs are tested at the age of 9 to 13 months and may be resubmitted once if they fail. Our GSDCA ZAP Character Test is open to all ANKC Registered German Shepherd Dogs from the age of 9 months to 8 years. Passing an IGP or UD, is no substitute for passing a ZAP Character Assessment, for the titles gained may tell us more about the trainer than the dog! The ZAP shows us the potential!

**Honey Gross-Richardson**  
**Coordinator of the ZAP assessment scheme (W.A.)**