



WHAT IS SCHUTZHUND?

Schutzhund is a German word that literally translated means “protection dog.” Today it refers to a sport that focuses on developing and evaluating those traits in dogs that make them more useful, predictable and happier companions to their owners.

Schutzhund, also called IPO work in many non-German countries, is a competitive sport that concentrates on three parts. Many familiar with the obedience work of the Australian Kennel Club’s affiliates will recognize the first two parts, tracking and obedience. The Schutzhund/IPO standards for the third part, usually described as the protection work, are similar to tests used for dogs in police work.

While dogs of other breeds are also admitted to Schutzhund/IPO trials, this breed evaluation test was developed specifically for the German Shepherd Dog. Schutzhund is intended to demonstrate the dog’s intelligence and utility. As a working trial, Schutzhund/IPO measures the dog’s mental stability, endurance, structural efficiencies, the ability to scent, willingness to work, courage and trainability.

This working dog sport offers an opportunity for dog owners to train their dog and compete with each other for recognition of both the handler’s ability to train and the dog’s ability to perform as required. It is a sport enjoyed by persons of varied professions, who join together in a camaraderie born of their common interest in working with their dogs. Persons of all ages and conditions of life, even those with significant disabilities, can and do enjoy Schutzhund/IPO as a sport. Very often, it is a family sport.

Schutzhund Titles

In addition to the Schutzhund titles, the Schutzhund Australia Inc. offers three additional training degrees. Two of these, the FH1 and FH2, are advanced tracking degrees that require the dog to follow tracks over changing terrain, discriminate between cross-tracks and is at least 3 hours old.

The third is the BH, or Traffic Steady Companion Dog. The BH is a degree for a traffic-safe companion dog that tests the dog’s temperament in and around people. It includes basic formal obedience - heeling on and off leash, sits, downs and recalls - as well as practical tests of the dog’s character when put into everyday situations. These include reaction to normal situations involving crowds of people, strange noises, joggers, cars and other dogs. Before being allowed to enter for a Schutzhund/IPO I title, the dog must first have successfully completed the BH.

There are three levels of the Schutzhund/IPO test for which titles can be earned.

For **Schutzhund/IPO/VPG I** the dog must be at least 16 months old and pass an initial temperament test by the judge. The dog must heel off the leash, demonstrate the walking sit, the walking down, and the down and stay tests, as well as 3 forms of retrieving (on the flat, over a hurdle and over a scaling wall) and the send-out. In tracking, it must be able to follow a track laid by its handler at least 20 minutes earlier. There are also protection tests to evaluate other essential working characteristics.

For **Schutzhund/IPO/VPG II** the dog must be at least 18 months old and must already have earned its Schutzhund/IPO/VPG I degree. It must again pass all of the obedience and protection tests required for the Schutzhund/IPO/VPG I degree, plus a walking stand, but for Schutzhund/IPO/VPG II they are made more difficult and require greater endurance, agility, and above all, control. In tracking, the Schutzhund/IPO II candidate must be able to follow a track laid by a stranger at least 30 minutes earlier.

For **Schutzhund/IPO/VPG III**, which is the Master's degree, the dog must be at least 20 months old and must have earned a Schutzhund/IPO/VPG II title. Again, the tests now are made far more difficult. There is the additional running stand. In tracking, the dog must follow a track that was laid by a stranger at least 60 minutes earlier. The track has four turns, compared with two turns for Schutzhund I and II, and there are three objects, rather than two, that must be found by the dog.

The picture of obedience, strength, eagerness and confidence presented by an excellent Schutzhund/IPO III team is a beautiful illustration of the partnership and harmony existing between man and dog.

The Three Parts of a Schutzhund Trial

The **tracking phase** includes a temperament test by the overseeing judge, to assure the dog's mental soundness. When approached closely on a loose leash, the dog should not act shyly or aggressively. The track is laid earlier by a person walking normally on a natural surface such as dirt or grass. The track includes a number of turns and a number of small, man-made objects left by this person on the track itself. At the end of a 10 metre leash, the handler follows the dog, which is expected to scent the track and indicate the location of the objects, usually by lying down with it between its front paws. The tracking phase is intended to test the dog's trainability and ability to scent, as well as, its mental and physical endurance.

The **obedience phase** includes a series of heeling exercises, some of which are closely in and around a group of people. During the heeling, there is a gun shot test to assure that the dog does not openly or adversely react to such sharp or alarming noises. There is also a series of field exercises in which the dog is commanded to sit, lie down and stand while the handler continues to move. From these various positions, the dog is recalled to the handler. With dumbbells of various weights, the dog is required to retrieve on a flat surface, over a one-meter hurdle and over a six-foot slanted wall. The dog is also asked to run in a straight direction from its handler on command and lie down on a second command.

Finally, each dog is expected to stay in a lying down position away from its handler, despite distractions, at the other end of the obedience field, while another dog completes the above exercises. All of the obedience exercises are tests of the dog's temperament, structural efficiencies and very importantly, its willingness to serve man or woman.

The **protection phase** tests the dog's courage, physical strength and agility. To succeed, the handler's control of the dog is absolutely essential. The exercises include a search of hiding places, finding a hidden person (acting as a human decoy), and guarding that decoy while the handler approaches. The dog is expected to pursue the decoy when an escape is attempted and to hold the grip firmly to prevent escape. The decoy is then searched and transported to the judge with the handler and dog walking behind, and later escorting from the decoy's right side. When the decoy attempts to attack the handler, the dog is expected to prevent the attack with a firm grip and without hesitation.

The final test of courage occurs when the decoy is asked to come out of a hiding place by the judge from the opposite end of the trial field. The dog is sent after the decoy when he refuses to listen to the handler's command to stop and instead runs directly at the handler and dog, threatening the dog with a stick. All grips during the protection phase are expected to be firmly placed on the padded sleeve and either stops on command or when the decoy discontinues the fight. The protection tests are intended to assure that the dog is neither a coward nor an uncontrollable menace.

What is the Judge looking for in the Dog?

At all three stages, whether Schutzhund/IPO I, II and III - each of the three levels has three phases consisting of obedience, tracking and protection. Each phase is worth 100 points, for a total of 300 points. If a dog does not receive a minimum of 70% of the points in tracking, 70% of the points in obedience and 70% of the points in protection, or if the dog fails the pre-trial temperament test, then it is not awarded a degree that day and must repeat the entire test, passing all phases of the test at a later trial. In every event, the Judge is looking for an eager, focused and accurate working dog. High

ratings and scores are given to the animal that displays a strong willingness and skills when working for its human handler.

The Schutzhund Trained Dog in the Home

Since Schutzhund and IPO are the demonstration of the German Shepherd Dog's most desirable characteristics, dogs well trained in Schutzhund & IPO are usually excellent companions in the home. The German Shepherd Dog, like any other working dog that possesses sound mental stability, has trust and confidence in itself, allowing it to be at peace with its surroundings.

In addition to requiring sound structural efficiencies for withstanding long and arduous work, the Breed Standard for the German Shepherd Dog calls for mental stability and a willingness to work too. The dog should be approachable, quietly standing its ground, showing confidence and a willingness to meet overtures without itself necessarily making them. It should be generally calm, but eager and alert when the situation warrants. It should be fearless, but also trustworthy with people and other animals.

The German Shepherd Dog should not be timid or react nervously to unusual sounds or sights. A dog that is overly aggressive because of its overall fears of people and events can be extremely dangerous. The Schutzhund/IPO sport is designed to identify and eliminate such dogs from breeding stock. Because Schutzhund/IPO training gives the owner a great deal of control over the dog, the owner is able to let the dog have more fun. Not only is Schutzhund/IPO training itself enjoyable for the dog, but the Schutzhund/IPO trained dog knows how to please its owners, creating a stronger bond between dog and owners.

The Schutzhund Trained Dog for Police Work.

A dog that performs well in Schutzhund or IPO work is obviously a very good candidate for police and other forms of service work. Police dogs, like other service dogs, must have temperaments with a good foundation of intelligence and utility. A minimal amount of additional training makes many well-trained Schutzhund/IPO dogs ready for active police duty. Such fearless police dogs can also work around children and in crowds without concerns on the part of their handlers.

Choosing a Puppy for Schutzhund.

In every breed, the pedigree is the key to knowing the potential of the puppy. Schutzhund & IPO revolves around working lines, from generations of dogs that have proven their qualities in high performance tests and therefore are able to produce similar characteristics in their offspring. These characteristics include not only the physical structure of the dog, which is very important, but also its temperament.

Selecting the bloodlines from which you want your puppy may require advice. Information from breed surveys and trial results can help. Of course, it makes sense to discuss your objectives with reputable and experienced Schutzhund handlers, enthusiasts and breeders.

Once you have determined that the bloodlines of the potential dam and sire are of a high quality, you should observe the parents, especially the mother, if that is at all possible. The dam will be the main influence on the young pup for the first eight weeks of its life. If the dam is nervous or unsure, chances are this uncertainty will be transferred to the offspring.

If you are able to see the litter, watch the puppies together and also separately to try to determine which is the best puppy for you. Obvious structural defects or health problems should be watched for.

It is important that the puppy have intense instinct to stalk the prey and chase a ball, a toy, etc., and should not show fear when away from its littermates or mother. The puppy should be adventurous and active, playing with objects shown to it by someone in the enclosure, but it should be independent enough to take that object and go off on its own as well.

It is independence and confidence, combined with the positive contact with the pack leader (the dam, at this time) that will develop into the traits of trainability that you need.

Raising a Puppy for Schutzhund Work.

Puppyhood is the most critical period for the development of the characteristics you want to encourage in a working dog and a good canine citizen. Schutzhund clubs can give you good advice about nurturing and socializing your growing puppy.

A puppy learns from its experiences, so you want to provide only positive ones. It should be provided with opportunity to explore and investigate new situations and new people, but always in a non-threatening way. Remember that your goal is to build confidence in the young animal. Your aim is NOT to dominate or oppress the young pup.

Exposure to different environments is crucial to the general education of the dog and also to assure it that the world is a safe place. If something appears to make the dog unsure, give it the opportunity to investigate it slowly, but do not force the issue.

It is imperative to avoid situations where your dog would be dominated by another older or stronger dog, or by another puppy. You also want to avoid having to discipline or correct your puppy and thus dampen its spirit or damage its self-confidence. You can do this by never leaving the pup in a situation where it can cause damage to your valuables or find itself in a dangerous predicament.

The final area of development is that of drive encouragement. The natural behaviours that you want to encourage are playing with the ball, tug of war, hide and seek, pulling toys on a string, pursuing you rapidly when you run away, and finally defending itself, its family and its home. The latter really only shows itself as the dog is more mature, somewhere between the ages of nine and eighteen months as the pup begins to feel more protective by barking at strangers or intruders.

It is better to leave for later formal obedience training with a young dog. The character of the puppy is not sufficiently strong to withstand the corrections involved in obedience training. Acceptable manners at home and in the car and "play" training, like learning to sit for a food reward is advisable. Serious obedience work should begin only after the dog is well on its way in the protection training.

Schutzhund Around the World

The first Schutzhund trial was held in Germany, in 1901, to emphasize the correct working temperament and ability in the German Shepherd Dog breed. Originally, these dogs were herding dogs, but the industrialization of Germany encouraged breeders to promote the use of their dogs as police and military dogs. The German Shepherd Dog Club of Germany (Verein fuer Deutsche Schaferhunde {S.V.e.V.}) the parent club, became concerned that this would lead to careless breeding and undesirable traits such as mental instability, so it developed the Schutzhund Test.

Since then, many other countries and other working dog organizations have also adopted Schutzhund as a sport and the definitive test for evaluating working performance ability in dogs. International rules have been established, and in the breed's homeland they are administered by the German Kennel Club (Verein fuer Deutsche Hundesport {VDH}).

The first official Schutzhund trials were held in Australia in the early Nineties. Today, the sport has sponsors in all parts of the country and teams come together each year to participate in the organization's Australian National Championship Trial. Australia's first national championship events originated out of the efforts of Schutzhund Australia Inc.'s founding members.

The Value to the Breed

In the breed's homeland any registered German Shepherd Dog that has earned a Schutzhund degree has demonstrated sufficient ability as a working dog to qualify for breed evaluation. The breed evaluation

is a very detailed examination of the dog's structure, temperament and pedigree and requires both a certification of good hip joints and sufficient performance on an endurance test (the Ausdauerpruefung, or AD test). Dogs that do well in the breed evaluation receive a Breed Survey I or Breed Survey II. This is a recommendation and evaluation by a trained and recognized expert Judge as the worthiness of the dog for breeding. Dogs rated Class II are "suitable for breeding" and dogs rated Class I are "recommended for breeding". By thus screening dogs in order to select the suitable specimens for breeding, Schutzhund helps to maintain the quality of the breed at a very high level.

Thus, there is a very high level of assurance that puppies from working breeds born to Schutzhund dams and sired by Schutzhund dogs are more likely to be of reliable temperament, high intelligence, steady nerves, extreme endurance, great strength, and sound structures.

Do Dogs Enjoy Schutzhund Training?

If trained in the right manner, dogs enjoy working, as anyone who attends a Schutzhund competition can see. The joy of the dogs in working with their handlers is evident.

For thousands of years, dogs have adapted to serve humans in a mutually beneficial relationship. While dogs could move quickly, hunt prey, and protect flocks and their owner, the humans could provide food, shelter from the most severe elements, and protection from larger predators, besides tending to the dog's injuries. A dog's reason for being is to serve humans.

Schutzhund training helps develop the dog's natural instincts to a high level. Self-confident dogs, doing work for which they are well trained, are happy dogs. Wagging tails, sounds of excitement, and strong pulling on a leash all show an observer at a Schutzhund trial how much fulfilment dogs find in this work.

For More Information about Schutzhund in Australia

Schutzhund Australia Inc is a national breed organization which was formed in 2005 for the specific purpose of catering to German Shepherd Dog owners and other working dog handlers who wished for a greater challenge than what ANKC events could offer them, and at the same time offer breeders and handlers an opportunity to test the breed worthiness of their dog's character and working ability against the international breed standard. We welcome all working dog enthusiasts who are interested in improving the working and structural qualities of the working breeds, specifically the German Shepherd Dog, and those people with an interest to know more about the sport.

In addition to local club trials, breed surveys, events and workshops, the national organization sponsors an annual Schutzhund National Championship Trial and State Trials.

For more information regarding membership or to request a membership application contact the

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Membership application forms can be obtained from this website.
