

German Shepherds from American lines are typically longer, taller and leaner than GSDs from German lines. American GSD lines tend to have sharp angulation in the hindquarters, more so than any other breed. This angulation allows them to move seemingly without touching the ground. American lines tend to be bred for elegance and nobility. A well-bred GSD from American lines is calm, discriminating and intelligent: never fearful. They are often less active and less dominant than their German counterparts, which can make them better pets for the potential owner looking solely for a good companion, especially novice owners.

To the negative side of GSDs from American lines, many lines lack working ability or drive. If you're interested in any kind of work or sport activity with your dog, look for a breeder who tests working aptitude in their breeding stock. (Aptitude can be tested separately from actually taking the dog to trials and competing in events.) The AKC does not require breeding dogs be able to work or have any titles.

GSDs with German lines are generally stockier than their American counterparts and more moderate in both structure and movement without the severe angulation found in American lines. They may not appear as graceful and dignified but instead have an air of muscular agility. German lines typically produce high-energy, high-intensity dogs. German breeding stock is required to pass minimum standards for both conformation and working ability, so dogs from German lines are rarely lacking intelligence.

A poor-quality German-line German Shepherd Dog may be too heavily built for real agility and/or may have a temperament that isn't suitable for any but the most experienced owner. Dominant aggression is more likely to be found in these lines than fear aggression. Some breeders breed for size and aggression rather than a well-rounded, well-tempered dog.

Hip certification in Germany follows different rules and guidelines than that of the OFA. Dogs are x-rayed at one year of age rather than two years, and hips are rated "A-normal", "fast normal" or "noch zugelassen". Hips rated NZ may not pass OFA certification.

Good examples of either German or American lines should be highly intelligent, trainable, and extremely loyal to their families. All German Shepherds, regardless of their ancestry, should be bred for good health and stable temperaments.

You will find fans of the American lines who will tell you that all German dogs are ugly and brutally aggressive, and some lovers of German lines would have you believe that American dogs are unsound, stupid, and cowardly. Both of these extremes are exaggerated: Healthy, mentally sound dogs can be found in either bloodline. The most important thing is to find a good breeder whom you trust and whose breeding stock (both the chosen sire and dam) fits your lifestyle, regardless of style or registry.

If you are interested in showing your dog in the AKC conformation ring with the intention of getting a championship, you are probably better off looking at American lines. It will be difficult if not impossible to win with a German Shepherd from German lines. American (AKC) GSDs

from responsible breeders are bred with an eye to what the AKC breed standard demands and what AKC conformation judges reward. A German line GSD may be beautiful but still won't be right for the AKC show ring.

If you are more interested in competing in Schutzhund, training for protection work, herding, SAR or other working discipline, you may be better off getting a GSD from German lines. There are American dogs who have the courage and drive, but their ancestors may not have competed for the last 6 or 8 generations. All of the German dog's ancestors have been selected for working ability, so you have a greater chance of finding a suitable puppy without having to test litter after litter. Also, since breeders of German lines are more likely to be involved in working disciplines, you will know someone who can mentor you.

Given the above generalizations, choose the type more suitable to your needs, lifestyle, and abilities. Both German and American lines have their passionate advocates, but the decision of what bloodline to purchase is ultimately a matter of taste, need, and expectations. If you do your "homework" in researching breeders to find someone who is responsibly selecting and testing their breeding stock to produce healthy, well-tempered German Shepherds, you are far more likely to end up with a puppy who fits your expectations more comfortably. Be totally open and honest with your breeder in your desires so s/he can help you select the right puppy for you.