

What Is IGP and Why the Working Line German Shepherd Is Especially Suited for This Sport

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Introduction

IGP (Internationale Gebrauchshunde Prüfungsordnung), formerly known as **Schutzhund**, is an international canine discipline designed to test and select the mental, nervous, and operational qualities of working dogs.

It is not merely a sport, but a scientific method for evaluating a dog's genetic predisposition for work, character stability, and capacity for collaboration with humans.

Historical Origins and Significance of the Trials

IGP originates from **Schutzhund**, developed in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century for the selection of the **German Shepherd Dog**.

The breed's founder, **Max von Stephanitz**, understood that beauty alone could not define the value of a dog: what truly mattered was **functional ability**, measured through controlled and objective work tests.

In 1901, under the **SV (Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde)**, the first utility dog trial was created to authorize breeding only for dogs proven suitable for work.

The three parts of Schutzhund — now IGP — derive directly from real service functions: tracking, obedience, and protection.

Structure of the Discipline

IGP consists of **three sections**, each representing a core quality of the true working dog:

1. Section A – Tracking (Fährtenarbeit)

Evaluates the dog's concentration and olfactory ability. The animal must follow a scent trail with calmness, independence, and precision.

2. Section B – Obedience (Unterordnung)

Assesses the dog's willingness to cooperate and its emotional control. Obedience must be performed with enthusiasm and confidence, without stress or submission.

3. Section C – Protection (Schutzdienst)

Simulates a controlled threat. The dog must respond with determination yet immediately stop upon the handler's command.

This section does not measure aggression, but rather **stability under pressure** — the perfect balance between instinct and control.

Genetic Connection to the Working Line German Shepherd

The **Working Line German Shepherd** is the breed for which the IGP regulations were originally designed.

Its neurobehavioral qualities — focus, emotional balance, and stress resistance — are the product of targeted genetic selection.

Ethological studies show that this breed has an optimal balance between **dopamine and serotonin**, promoting calmness, concentration, and sustained learning capacity.

These neurochemical and behavioral traits make the breed exceptionally adept at maintaining clarity, motivation, and composure even under high stress — the exact attributes evaluated by the IGP.

IGP as a Modern Breeding and Selection Tool

Today, IGP remains a reliable indicator of **genetic and mental equilibrium**.

A dog that successfully completes IGP trials demonstrates stable endocrine function, solid temperament, and cooperative instinct.

These heritable traits are essential for maintaining the German Shepherd's original working purpose, ensuring that the breed remains healthy, capable, and faithful to Stephanitz's founding principles.

Conclusion

IGP represents the very essence of the **Working Line German Shepherd** — balance, intelligence, and self-control.

It unites genetics, ethology, and applied training, providing an objective tool to preserve the authentic working nature of the breed.

As Max von Stephanitz famously said:

“The beauty of the German Shepherd lies in its utility.”

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