

German Shepherd Dog Behaviors and Instincts

As for any other dog breed, German Shepherds have unique behavior, which it is known for. Many of the typical canine behavior are all the same irrespective of breeds, types and bloodlines yet certain behaviors are unique to the German Shepherd Dog breed.

Activity: German Shepherd is a working breed and will be happy to please you by doing anything you want. This is typical to German Shepherd Dog, which made it the world's most renowned working breed, being recruited in drug detection departments, security departments, as well as medical departments. This behavior of GSD breed is an impulse to be constantly active, but not hyperactive constantly. Activeness in any dog is mental manifestation supported to physical ability; German Shepherd Dog breed is of no exception. While hyper active is not a desirable character in the German Shepherd Dog breed, yet overly active in certain time, for instance during the play time is normal and is an indication that he is having extra energies to be exhausted in the play.

Protection: This drive (defense drive) is a genetically transferred behavioral trait in well bred German Shepherds. This drive is better explained as the mental manifestation again to defend and protect his pack that includes the leader and all members of the pack. This behavior is exhibited when there is either actual or imagined threat sensed. Well bred German Shepherds are steady of nerve and highly assertive. He would immediately become alert on even the most subtle sign of strangeness. Sometimes this drive is exhibited in a so subtle way that it hardly becomes noticeable, while in most cases, defense drive is accompanied with aggression. However, many well bred GSDS show defensive tendencies without exhibiting aggression.

Guard: Many a times confused with protection or defense drive, Guard behavior in German Shepherd Dogs is its territorial instinct that is used to defend its territory by delivering heavy-weight barks – especially rolling growls. Following the warning signals of the guard behavior the dog may give defensive bite if necessary. This kind of attack is usually not fatal; Rather should be considered as second stronger warning signal. This behavior is territorial by nature, and is stimulated by other drives and repetitive barks.

Courage: The ability to overcome fear is courage. German Shepherd dogs are courageous and the drive can only be exhibited in situations when the dog gets frightened.

Affability: This is the willingness of the dog to get in touch with people. German Shepherd Dogs are friendly by behavior and good to kids as long as they are not challenged or threatened. If not well bred, GSD can exhibit shy behavior, which demeans the degree of affability.

Cooperative: German Shepherd Dogs are co-operative with pack members – especially the pack leader (we consider Human to the pack leader here). Cooperation is the nature to be influenced by the handler/owner without being given a direct command or sign. Most often this behavior in GSD is considered as willingness to please.

Studies on German Shepherd Dog behavior indicate that general canine behavior as well as specific behavior in German Shepherds are "influenced by several systematic environmental, as well as genetic, effects". Therefore, directional selection for certain desired behavior is possible. According to the "Genetic analysis of results of a Swedish behavior test on German Shepherd Dogs and Labrador Retrievers" by E. H. van der Waaij, E. Wilsson, and E. Strandberg of Animal Breeding and Genomics Centre, Wageningen University, "systematic effects in some cases cause large upward or downward bias to the eventual phenotype. Not taking these effects into account when making selection decisions thus may have substantial influence on selection results. Estimating breeding values would be a good solution, incorporating both correction for systematic effects and using all genetic links."