

# AKC German Shepherds Are Wolf "Hybrids"

By Ann Dresselhaus (3/21/97)

All dogs are "wolfdogs." The only difference between them (besides appearance and temperament) is the number of generations away from a "pure" wolf the individual canine is. The original German Shepherd studbook, Zuchtbuch fur Deutsche Schaferhunde (SZ), shows several pure wolves were used to "create" the breed and this was only 90 years ago! Similar events can be uncovered for Alaskan Malamutes, Siberian Huskies, Belgian Shepherd types, and many rarer-breed "dogs." German Shepherds were recently the MOST POPULAR AKC breed. Imagine that — a "wolfdog" is the most popular working/companion dog!

I think a key question to be answered is: WHEN does a "wolf" become a dog?

1. Since the wolf and the dog are the same species, is there really such an entity as a wolf "HYBRID."
2. Since all dogs are descended from wolves, are not all dogs "wolfdogs"? The only difference between them (besides appearance and temperament) is the number of generations away from a 'pure' wolf the individual canine is.
3. Are we really not just talking about 'recent' wolf crosses (the onus being on us to define "recent")?

Many (but not all!) of the dogs we have today resulted from the PRIMARY domestication of the Old World Southern Wolf, a smaller, less pack-oriented animal than the Northern Wolf, the wolf we are most familiar with today and which most of the 'recent' wolf crosses have used. I say MANY dogs, but not all because many of the Northern breeds are the result of a SECONDARY domestication of the result of the primary with the Northern Wolves as "recent" as 90 years ago (documented in the German Shepherd). The primary happened thousands of years ago, but it is a mistake to think that that was the LAST time wolves were used in dog breeds.



**Horand von Grafrath**

Originally known as Hektor

I present the following research for your perusal:

The original German Shepherd studbook, Zuchtbuch fur Deutsche Schaferhunde (SZ), shows several pure wolves were used to "create" the breed. Captain Von Stephanitz, of the German infantry, bought sheep-herding dogs (many of them field trial winners) from all over Europe in the late 1800's and early 1900's and bred them together to create his "ultimate service dog." He started a registry and stud book. His favorite dog, Hektor, he gave the first # (SZ 1). Hektor was 1/4th wolf. He was bred to every decent bitch around, and all the dogs

originally imported to America were proudly traced back to him. Shortly thereafter, the German Shepherd Dog's (GSD) name was changed to Alsatian Wolf Dog. Their popularity soared for a while, then fell tremendously as the media sensationalized every trivial remotely negative event that occurred associated with a canine with the word "wolf" in it. There were arguments left and right: "Was the Alsatian Wolfdog (GSD) the best working/most capable/most intelligent dog that ever walked the face of the earth OR was Alsatian Wolfdog (GSD) the unpredictable/livestock eating/human attacking

beast from hell? Sound familiar? Well, we know how that one turned out. The name was eventually changed back to GSD, things calmed down, and the GSD soon reached its peak at the top of the "most popular dog" list shortly after Rin Tin Tin aired.

In the first decade of 1900, Von Stephanitz wrote a book (in German) about his loyal hard working dogs called *The German Shepherd in Word and Picture*, in which he documents the above heritage and pleads to the breeders not "to add more wolf blood" into his dogs as he had ALREADY found the IDEAL combination. In 1923, an American version was translated VERBATIM. Not many copies were printed and few still exist. Fang@howling.com has a pricey (about \$350) original and more may be found by doing rare book searches. In 1932, an 8th Enlarged and "Revised" (read sanitized) version was financed by English speaking "interests." All references to the positive wolf heritage were removed and most GSD fanciers have been denying RECENT wolf heritage ever since.

Herr Strebel is quoted in *The Alsatian Wolf-Dog* by G. Horowitz as saying that he "has seen how easily a wolf can step into the pedigree of Alsations without causing all those terrible phenomena which are considered to be the results of crossing with a wolf." He gives an example of a hybrid wolf (whose granddam was a wolf) who "absolutely had the temperament of a Sheepdog; who was obedient and faithful, and the pet of the house" (page 14, "Concerning the Wolf Cross"). He goes on to state that this is a striking example of how quickly all trace of wolf's blood is lost in a "domesticated" breed.

In 1912, Monsieur Henry Sodenkamp wrote in the Belgian journal, *Chasse et Peche (The Chase and Hunt)*, that it is the French opinion that "THE WOLF LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE ALSATIAN." (The breed was partially created in Alsace, France).

Mores Plieningen, SZ #159, who was bred to the first Stud dog, Horand Von Grafath (previously known as Hektor) and whose blood is said to be in the pedigree of every GSD in the world today, was the granddaughter of a wolf at the Stuttgart Zoo/Gardens. Their son, Hektor Von Schwaben, SZ #13, figured heavily in the early GSD line. (Captain Von Stephanitz bought Hektor Liksrhein and renamed him Horand Von Grafath, after his kennel name.)

In the original German Shepherd studbook, *Zuchtbuch für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SZ)*, within the 2 pages of entries from SZ #41 to SZ #76, there are 4 WOLF crosses.

(Note: fang@howling.com OWNS the actual Volume I and II of the GSD Stud books. I have interlibrary loaned the other old books mentioned and made copies of all the relevant statements.)

So, I ask of you, are (AKC) German Shepherds wolf "hybrids"?

For GSD fanciers and those interested in seeing the GSDs that came shortly after the wolf cross, there is a book out that few know about: ***Working Dogs: An Attempt To Produce A Strain Of German Shepherds Which Combines Working Ability And Beauty Of Conformation.*** It was first published in the 1930's and the breeding was done 10 years before that or so. It has been republished by DogWise now and is really inexpensive. This is a must read for breeders trying to create a line of any type! plus it has some of the oldest founding member GSD pics all in one place. It was a German Shepherd Dog "working dog" breeding project. (<http://www.gettextbooks.com/search/?isbn=ISBN%3A+1-9292-4222-0>)



**Beowulf**

**Beowulf was an early inbred dog in the line.**