

Soft\_on\_point.txt

(Question)

The NAVHDA Chapter president commented about the Small Munsterlander's particularly soft pointing style. He also mentioned that NAVHDA judges seem to knock off points for it.

(Answer)

It's important for you to have a basic understanding of some of the nuances of the SM breed, because they are so rare in North America that you will find there are many misconceptions. Very few people have trained a Small Munsterlander and not many people have ever hunted with one.

It is not actually true that all Munsters have a soft pointing style. Your puppy should not. Both his parents have very traditional, staunch points (straight tail, front foot up, nose down) and all his brothers/sisters from previous litters have similar points. To date, all Brush Dale pups that have been NA tested received a 4 (max score) in pointing. So, you should not expect your puppy to have anything but a beautiful point.

There are a couple of old sires from German lines that are known to produce pups that don't point at all. Needless-to-say, most breeders won't use them as studs. The Germans don't care what the point looks like. A dog can even lie down on point. The Germans are all about what happens after the shot (retrieving), whereas in the US we like to see a staunch, stylish point on our dogs. This is one of the reasons the German Breed Club would like us to become a Landesgruppe (Chapter) - breeding with our dogs would greatly improve the pointing of their dogs. So, while it's true that you may still see some Munsters that are "soft on point," it is not widespread in the North American dogs.

There is a difference between being "soft on point" and not having a strong pointing instinct. Being "soft on point" refers to the way the point looks. The standard for the SM breed calls for the Munster to have a point where the tail is slightly up from horizontal - unlike the near vertical tail of the English Pointer. While the tail isn't supposed to go straight up, the overall point should still be intense. NAVHDA judges are to score the point only on its intensity. That means the dog's eyes should be focused intently on the area where it believes the bird to be, the dog should be standing still, and there should be no mistaking that the dog is pointing. The dog's tail can "flag" a bit, which is a kind of a wag. NAVHDA judges will only score a dog down on pointing if the point lacks intensity.

The German Shorthaired and English Pointers have a very strong pointing instinct. The GSP is the most popular versatile dog in the US. Throughout their many years in North America, these dogs have been selectively bred for a maximum "pause before a pounce," which is all a point is. They start pointing almost as soon as they can walk as puppies. Their pointing instinct is so strong that there's virtually nothing you can, or cannot, do to make them stop pointing. On the other hand, SM's are fairly new to North America, so they aren't very far from their German roots. Although most US-bred SM's point as puppies, care must be taken to not discourage them from pointing. Catching birds, too much pressure too soon, and use of check

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cards are all known to discourage pointing in a young Munster.