

Buying Tips.

So you are looking to add a German Shepherd to your family and wonder how much you should budget for a puppy? I have taken the following tips from a website and edited to my ideals. I am rather taken aback at the puppies being offered by some “breeders” so am using this article to try and educate on why my puppies may be so expensive.

How much is a German Shepherd puppy?

German Shepherd Dogs are an extremely popular breed in the US – the American Kennel Club lists these dogs as these #3 breed in 2020 (only surpassed by the Labrador Retriever and the French Bulldog). Their beauty, loyalty and intelligence makes them wonderful companions and watchdogs.

However, a well-bred German Shepherd is not cheap. While it does depend on the current market situation it is possible to find puppies without papers for much less (as little as \$200 in some cases) with the average price for a puppy without papers is \$800. These usually come from lines without health and temperament testing. While it might be tempting to jump on a “bargain” like this, don’t do it: German Shepherds have a variety of breed-specific health issues. Only responsible breeders who test and select the healthiest dogs for breeding will produce the best puppies. These health-tested and papered puppies will be quite a lot more than \$800: Most AKC breeders’ prices for German Shepherd puppies start at \$1,500 and can go up as high as \$5,000. It is much better to spend a bit more on the initial purchase price and get a well-mannered puppy with great genes!

Why are German Shepherds so expensive?

Breeding dogs is a lot more than simply pairing two adults of the same breed, raising the puppies and selling them. Responsible breeders take their dogs to dog shows, or if not active in the show rings at least have dogs from titled parents. A responsible breeder should have them cleared for any breed-specific health issues, put a lot of time and effort into finding the perfect mate and raise the puppies with a lot of sensory stimulation and early socialization.

Most of the health issues that German Shepherds can exhibit cannot simply be diagnosed in a quick exam at the vet. Instead, they require more involved diagnostics such as x rays (to check for hip dysplasia) or genetic testing. This is not cheap – and will be reflected in the purchase price of the puppies!

In particular, a responsible breeder will perform:

- Hip x rays (certified by OFA or German SV)
- Elbow x rays (certified by OFA or German SV)
- DNA test for common genetic diseases like DM etc.

If a breeder tries to tell you that his puppies are healthy because their parents never had any issues – do not believe him! It is impossible to diagnose e.g. mild hip dysplasia without radiographs.

Where can you find cheap German Shepherd Dogs?

You will be able to find GSD puppies who cost much less than \$1,500. The question is – do you want to purchase a dog with questionable health and temperament?

Many of the “cheap” puppies may not be registered at all or the parents are with a registry that is not internationally recognized. AKC is the only American registry that is recognized by foreign agencies. The puppy may be registrable with AKC but if the breeder can’t tell you (and maybe doesn’t even know the lineage) or show you the lineage with the titles I would avoid. A great resource the breeder can use to show bloodline is the website Pedigreedatabase.com. I would be very leery of a puppy that the parents are not listed on that or a similar website.

Temperament and behavior

While a lot of good manners can be taught through consistent training, temperament is genetic to a certain level. The disposition to be anxious, stressed, reactive or “over the top” can be passed on by parents to their offspring. Responsible breeders will take the parents’ character into account and only pair two dogs who make a good match not only in their body type, but also temperament.

Unfortunately, many irresponsible breeders do not take the parents’ behavior into account when deciding which pairing to make. When you buy an extra cheap German Shepherd puppy, you not only get a dog with questionable health, but also with unpredictable temperament! Even aggression can be genetic and can be passed on from the mom and dad to the offspring. Many aggressive German Shepherds come from poor breeding. You can save yourself a lot of time, nerves and money spent on future behavioral training by getting a well-bred (and more expensive) dog.

What is the most expensive type of German Shepherd?

Like in many dog breeds, certain rare colors are becoming much more popular. Special colors such as blue, liver or the Panda Shepherd and Isabella German Shepherd are all serious faults and may possibly be disqualified from a show. Dogs with one or two blue eyes is also a fault and will be disqualified.

The desired colors are black, red and tan and may be present in any of the standard patterns: solid, bi-color, blanket back, sable, and saddle. Coat may vary but strong rich color is preferred. Pale, washed off colors is a serious fault. All white must be disqualified and should not be bred.

While it is tempting to get a color that nobody else has – don’t let looks alone guide your decision on your future puppy. It is much more important that your puppy has a sound temperament and fits in well with your family and lifestyle than that he has a certain rare look.

In recent years, a few breeders have produced so-called “Miniature German Shepherds”. Breeders of Miniature German Shepherds charge extremely high prices for their puppies. It is important to note that there is no such breed as a Miniature German Shepherd registered with the AKC. These dogs are mutts (German Shepherds mixed with Miniature Poodles, Shelties or other smaller breeds). On Craigslist or similar classified ads, many dog owners sell puppies from “oops litters” (unplanned litters) or puppies that they bred on purpose without any health testing. These dogs often are not purebred German Shepherd puppies, but are mixed with e.g. Labradors, Pitbulls or Golden Retrievers. These are also mutts. They might be as cheap as \$200. If you end up with a dog with genetically based health conditions however, be prepared to spend a multiple of the original purchase price on vet costs! Once more, be certain to not decide on your future dog based on looks alone. A stable temperament and good health is much more integral than a certain size, weight or being cheap.

Working lines vs show lines

The German Shepherd was originally bred as a working dog. Since his original use as a shepherd dog however, he has filled many different roles – from guarding properties over being used in the show ring to participating in Schutzhund and IPO trails.

Depending on which lines your German Shepherd Dog comes from, the prices can vary a lot!

The working lines tend to be more “high strung” as they have more drive for their type of work and are bred for the higher drive.

Show line German Shepherds are the dogs that are bred for conformation shows. These are the type of dogs you should decide on if you would like a shepherd puppy as a pet and companion animal.