

Gordon Setters
Tall, dark and
handsome
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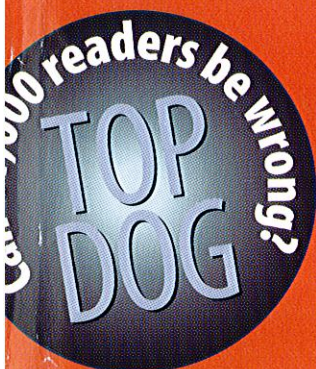
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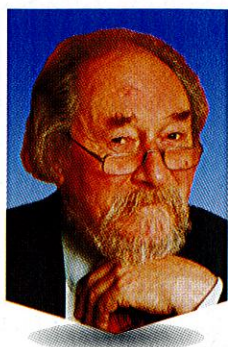




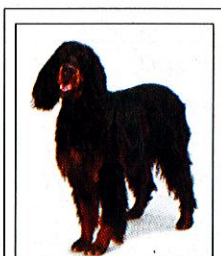


Fido Fact File | Gordon Setter

Group:	Gundog
Country of origin:	Scotland
Original function:	Bird dog
Availability:	Difficult
Average life span:	12-13 years
Age at maturity:	Three years
Height:	62-66 cm
Weight:	25.5-29kg
Is the breed a natural guard dog?	Very alert, will give warning
With strangers?	Cautious
Coat type:	Moderate length, free of wave and curl, legs, ears and belly feathered
Colours:	Black with lustrous tan markings on head. Two tan spots on chest and legs
Does the coat matt or tangle?	Only the feathering
Coat care:	Regular brushing on body and combing of feathering
Does the coat need professional grooming?	No
Does the coat need trimming for the show ring?	A little trimming under the chin and hind legs
Exercise:	This is a running outside dog and needs plenty of exercise to maintain physical and mental health
Average monthly food bill:	£19
Ease of training:	Easy, very biddable
Temperament with children:	Really good but needs respect
With dogs?	Basically friendly, some dominance with own breed
With cats?	Good with own, be careful with others
Would he live in peace with other pets?	Pay attention, he is a hunter
Town or country dog?	Country
Would he live happily in a flat or apartment?	No
Would he live in a kennel if necessary?	Yes but not too happily
Does the breed suffer with cold, heat, wet?	No
Does the breed suffer hereditary anomalies?	Some HD, only buy from tested parents
Special considerations:	Not to be overfed when young. Care with additives needed. Not too much exercise when young, at least until about nine months of age, build strength slowly
Character sketch:	A great companion dog if trained with firm kindness. Intelligent and bold of character, will act on his own initiative



Robert Killick is a writer, poet and Welsh Terrier owner. He is the author of several books including *An Owner's Guide to the West Highland White Terrier*, *An Owner's Guide to the Yorkshire Terrier* and the upcoming books *Dog Showing from Beginning to Winning* and *The Family Dog*.



Fido photography

The Gordon Setters featured on these pages are Louis, Laura, Elli and Will. They are owned by Jill Dixon and Emma Bullock. See page 20 for details of breeds needed to attend future photo sessions.

Studio Photography:
Tim Rose at Martin Dawe Photography Ltd.

Alternative breeds:
Sally Anne Thompson at the Animal Photography Partnership.

Robert Killick's Fido Facts | Gordon Setter

The Gordon Setter is thought by many to be the most handsome of the setter breeds. It was popular among the aristocrats and monied classes in the middle to late 19th century, but sadly lost ground to the ubiquitous Labrador until, in the 1960's their numbers had reduced alarmingly – in 1962 less than 100 were registered. However, gundog fanciers are, once again, appreciating the unique qualities and the breed has staged a come-back, the Gordon Setter Club now has 800 members with a calendar full of events and activities.

There are three breeds of setters, that is dogs that find game and indicate to their owners where it is, without doubt their absolute origin lies in the early spaniels which are said to come from Spain. Over the years, by a process of selective breeding, their shape and working inclination has been changed. Their long legs allow them to see and smell game birds in long grass and ferns and in the middle of the 1800's they were among the most popular of gundogs.

One of their most distinguishing features is the spectacular black and tan coat, to see them in their natural environment with the sun shining on their glossy backs is a sight to enthuse any gundog fancier. Black and tan setters have been around for a very long time, oil paintings from 1600 prove the point, at that time they were described as a 'Black and Fallow Setting dog'. Early books refer to them from 1726 but it wasn't until the fourth Duke of Gordon (1743-1827) became interested that their prowess in the field was recognised, not all of the Duke's dogs were black and tan, in fact they were of many colours including splashes of white.

The Duke preferred black and tans probably because of their greater staying power, their steadiness on point and their enthusiasm for the hunt. It was the Duke who began to stabilise type and the white virtually disappeared although a few white hairs on the chest are sometimes seen and allowable on today's dogs. In those far off days

The Gordon Setter is a running, working breed. They need to be out and about with as much country exercise as possible to stimulate their bodies, minds and senses



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Further Fido Facts

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Call any of our Gordon Setter breed advisors in the *Dial-a-Dog* section of the magazine

How many in rescue on average each year?

It varies, last year there were 36

Main cause?

Change of personal circumstances such as a marriage breakdown, house move or a new baby

Rescue contact:

Mrs Jill Dixon, 0161 440 0385



Gordon Setters can easily be trained into the social graces and when adult, although having a kindly disposition, will act as watchdogs warning of intruders

breeders were most interested in the performance of their dogs, not their looks and there is a story surrounding this breed which is often denied by fanciers. It has been said that the old Duke had a collie, which had an excellent nose and was most adept in finding game birds. The Duke is supposed to have included the collie in his breeding plans, which may account for the fact that in its early days Gordon Setters had a tendency to encircle the birds rather than point, a habit which was bred out. True or false we have

Kept in good condition a pair of these dogs would grace any country house large or small and bring pleasure to each member of the family

no way of finding out but many breeds had outcrosses introduced for specific purposes when their function was being decided.

The fifth Duke sold the dogs but the sixth, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, re-established the kennels and the breed and although they were not the most popular setter for working it wasn't long before the sheer beauty of the animals changed the breeders' minds. The fact that a Gordon Setter won first prize out of the setter class at the first dog show ever which was held in Newcastle in 1859 underlined their faith in the breed. Later in 1863 at the first ever field trials held in Southill first places were captured by Gordon Setters.

The breed was originally developed to work the harsh moorlands and hills of Scotland. It needed to be tough, indifferent to the weather and capable of a long day's work without interruption, their sense of smell was outstanding, they seldom made a mistake when pointing, they seldom missed a bird and would retrieve. If they had a failing at the time it was that they were not swift

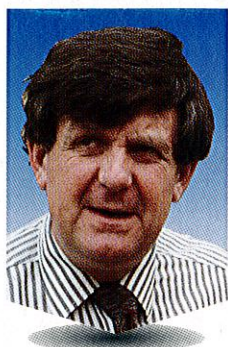
enough
in the
field.

In build and conformation they are bigger than their setter cousins, but with judicious selective breeding they are becoming faster. The Gordon Setter Club is most concerned that although most are kept as pets nowadays, the working instinct is not lost and they keep close contact with their parallel field trial club.

Agree to agree

All owners are agreed on one thing, they are a most agreeable dog to have around either as a working gundog or a house pet. By nature they are gentle and caring for their human family, sometimes attaching themselves to a single person. The coat is not difficult to maintain, it is of moderate length, free of curl but there is fringing on the ears, legs, underside and chest; after a run in the country the fringes should be combed out before they tangle. It has to be remembered that this breed is a running, working breed, they need to be out and about, they need country exercise, as much as possible to stimulate their bodies, minds and senses. They can easily be trained into the social graces and when adult, although having a kindly disposition, they will act as watchdogs giving warning of intruders. Kept in good condition a pair of these dogs would grace any country house large or small and bring pleasure to each member of the family. IIII





Dr Malcolm Willis is a respected geneticist and dog show judge. He owns German Shepherd Dogs and Bernese Mountain Dogs and is the author of several books including *Genetics of the Dog*, *German Shepherd Dog – A Genetic History* and *Bernese Mountain Dogs Today*.

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Dr Malcolm Willis's Fido Facts MOT | Gordon Setter

The Gordon Setter is unique among setters in being a black and tan animal and it is a late maturing breed of variable size extending over the full height range of the standard. Gordon Setter breeders have been progressively minded about genetic defects and during July 2000 the breed had a world conference in the Midlands attended by many breeders from around the world. I had the distinction of addressing the meeting along with Professor Lust from Cornell University, New York State and Dr Jeff Sampson, the KC geneticist.

Coat

The number of genetic diseases affecting the Gordon Setter is not huge and few are distinctive. One defect that is relatively rare though not exclusive to the breed is Black Hair Follicular dysplasia. A simple autosomal recessive this condition causes loss of hair – but only in black areas of the coat and it usually occurs in mid puppyhood.

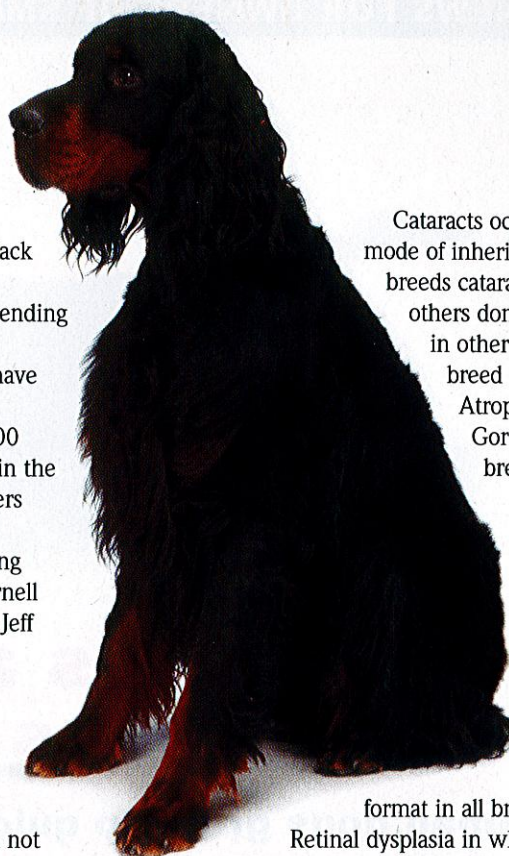
Neurological disease

Two basic conditions are found in the Gordon Setter. The first is epilepsy. A name, which simply indicates fitting but, as is well known, fitting can be the result of various environmental features. The important aspect is primary or idiopathic epilepsy, which occurs in a large number of breeds. This condition is genetic but mode of inheritance is unclear. Most data suggests a polygenic trait but the possibility of a major recessive gene being involved does exist. Compared with some breeds epilepsy is not that common in the Gordon but it can occur. When epilepsy is seen it is imperative to discover whether it is primary epilepsy or the result of some other factor.

Another relatively rare condition is Cerebellar degeneration. The cerebellum is in the brain and certain cells, called Purkinje cells, degenerate leading to ataxia (uncoordinated movement), paralysis and usually death. The type varies from breed to breed with most work being undertaken on the Kerry Blue Terrier in USA where the condition was called Cerebellar Abiotrophy causing death by around 16 weeks. In the Gordon Setter the condition is later in onset (by 30 months) but it is thought that all these abiotrophies are autosomal recessives. A similar condition with usually earlier onset is seen in Border Collies, Rough Collies and the Brittany among others.

Eye disease

For some reason gundogs seem prone to various eye diseases and the Gordon Setter is no exception. Entropion, the turning in of the eyelids is common in dog breeds and though positive proof that it is genetic is not available it is certainly familial in that it tends to occur among related animals.



Cataracts occur in the breed but the mode of inheritance is unclear. In some breeds cataract can be recessive and in others dominant; in some adult and in others juvenile in origin. The breed also has Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA). Actually the Gordon Setter was the first breed in which PRA was recorded, being discovered by a man called Magnusson in Sweden around 1909. Since then more attention has been given to other breeds than the Gordon but in all cases PRA is an autosomal recessive though not identical in format in all breeds.

Retinal dysplasia in which there are folds in the retina due to faulty development is known in the breed. Although believed to be a simple recessive the exact nature of Retinal Dysplasia and its effect upon eyesight is variable.

Skeletal disease

The Gordon Setter, like many large breeds, can be affected by Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD) and the type that can affect the Gordon Setter is in the elbow where the breed has Fragmented Coronoid Process. In modern parlance this is called Elbow Dysplasia and manifests itself in various forms but is believed to be a polygenic trait with a relatively high (35-60 per cent) heritability. Most elbow problems are manifest at about four-five months and demonstrate intermittent lameness. Although known in the breed few Gordons appear to be elbow scored under the BVA/KC scheme.

The same is not true of Hip Dysplasia. In Britain

Hip score distribution in the Gordon Setter

Score Range	Percent of total	Cumulative %
0	0.24	0.24
1 - 5	3.64	3.88
6 - 10	17.71	21.59
11 - 15	20.27	41.86
16 - 20	12.94	54.80
21 - 30	17.05	71.85
31 - 40	11.21	83.06
41 - 50	6.38	89.45
51 - 60	4.47	93.92
61 - 70	2.98	96.90
71 - 80	1.73	98.63
81 - 90	0.72	99.34
91 - 100	0.48	99.82
101-106	0.18	100.00



the Gordon Setter ranks sixth worst out of the 76 breeds that have got at least 40 animals scored.

The breed ranges from 0 to 104 (maximum range 0-106) with a mean score of 24.55. In total 1,677 Gordons have been scored which is about 12th in terms of the most animals assessed. The table on page 20 shows the distribution of scores for the breed.

Only less than four per cent of the breed score five or better which would be an excellent hip and about 22 per cent score 10 or better (a very acceptable hip score) with a score of 20 being needed to encompass 50 per cent of the breed. Almost 29 per cent score in excess of 30 which is a poor score and almost 11 per cent score in excess of 50 which would be a very severe HD status.

There is no doubt the breed has poor hips as a general pattern and thus it is imperative that Gordon Setter breeders use only hip scored parents for breeding and ideally seek to use those below 15 and try to mate animals that together do not total more than 30. The lower the scores bred from and the greater attention that is given to "good producing" sires (and dams) the faster will hips improve.

Miscellaneous conditions

Gastric Dilation-Volvulus or Torsion, sometimes called bloat, is known to occur in deep chested breeds and is known in the Gordon. Mode of inheritance is unclear but it is a disease that can lead to death if the stomach twists around on itself and veterinary help is not sought immediately. Various so-called preventative measures have been put forward but it does appear that it can occur on a variety of diets. Feeding twice/day rather than once and control of exercise until long after meals are all recommended but it does appear that once a dog bloats it is likely to do so again at intervals.

Hypothyroidism leading to destruction of the thyroid and damage to the immune system has been discussed previously in connection with other breeds. Hair loss and weight gain can occur and it is possible that this condition is widespread among dog breeds with a relatively unknown mode of inheritance.

As breeds go, the Gordon is not saddled with many defects and of those described above HD is probably the most widespread and serious within the breed. ||||

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