

*This is the first in a series of breed specific articles for The Westchester Pet Gazette. I hope my experiences help you with choosing and understanding the canine breed of your choice. I am beginning with the smallest breed in the series.*

## **The Dachshund**

The Dachshund may not be the "most popular" breed in Westchester County but we have no "shortage" of them either. Along with being one of the oddest shaped breeds in dogdom, the Dachshund is also one of the most adorable. Although there is recognition of this type of tracking dog since the 16th century, this low and long breed of dog was developed in Germany roughly around 1848 and was commonly known as the Teckel. Dachs means badger, thus these dogs were bred to track and hunt rabbits and badger, with their short legs and long bodies enabling them to fit into burrows and drive out the game.

The American conformation (body structure) standards for the miniature and standard size Dachshund may vary from the original German ideal. Dachshund height requirements suggest that the height at the shoulder should be half the length of the body from the sternum (chest bone) to the set-on (top of the tail set). Miniatures should weigh up to 11 pounds and large standards can be seen at almost 30 pounds. The Germans feel that Dachshunds should not weigh over 20 pounds, leaving basically no difference between the miniature and standard. Tweenies is the term used to describe Dachsies that are between miniature and standard, and weigh up to 17 or 18 pounds. There is no show class for tweenies but when we are looking for a friend, size and weight are usually not of paramount importance. Correct conformation in all varieties calls for a flat- top of the head, slight curve of top line just over the dog's loin, and substantial bone quality. Because of the breeds trailing duties, the dog's chest should not drop below its carpus (wrists.) One could imagine that a dog whose oversized chest is dragging on the ground would not be considered suitable for tracking.

Colors of this noble breed can be black and tan, chocolate and tan, red, dapple and occasionally brindle. The dachshund may be seen in smooth, longhair and wirehaired coat varieties. Interestingly, the smooth-haired variety was produced from the breeding of a French pointer with a pinscher. Pinscher is synonymous with terrier and their job is to kill vermin. Therefore, the dachshund is a breed that strikes a resemblance to the Doberman pinscher, works the ground like a terrier, yet because of its superior trailing abilities it resides in the hound group.

Since childhood, I have personally enjoyed Dachshunds or "frankfurters" as my parents called them. Because of their compact size, they flourished in my old Bronx neighborhood. While some dachsies were approachable and could be petted, others were untouchable due to my fear of being consumed like a human hot dog. Throughout the

years, I have noticed that Dachsie owners often cohabit with more than one at a time. The often comical nature of this breed makes it easy to have several worming their way throughout your house and your heart. Most owners admit having to laugh at the antics of these energetic sausages especially when they are doing something wrong. This can become difficult for the obedience instructor or behavioral counselor who is preaching discipline and consistency to overcome any unruly behaviors. Just in case you thought that they were not physically capable, I have seen dachshunds excel in obedience because Dachshunds are both mentally and physically prepared to do their intended work.

In 1973, while working as a veterinary assistant, a seasoned veterinary technician warned me against breed prejudices because the owners of these breeds would pick up the bad vibes and complain to the doctor. Ironically in the very next breathe the same technician said " watch out for smooth red Dachshunds, they bite!" Generally, many forms of aggression can be prevented through early and consistent socialization and basic training; still it is funny how anecdotal information sometimes rings true. Almost thirty years later, several red Dachshunds have bitten me, while I'm yet to be bitten by any black Dachshunds. My experience with this breed also suggests the smooth and wirehaired varieties are more aggressive than longhaired Dachshunds. I would never say that an entire breed or breed type is aggressive because even when aggression is the end goal, some individuals will be soft.

Dachshunds with a strong hunting drive can become possessive of objects or even their own bodies during times of excitement. I have personally found that breeders who concentrate on conformation often produce a more social house pet, while breeders of working line dogs need to produce a more vigorous individual capable of performing in the field. When your working bloodline Dachshund digs up your yard in search of vermin, you should yell out "GOOD DOG" for he is doing his intended job. Owners know your breeders and make sure they can verbalize their end goals to you so that you can make an informed decision on the right dog for you. To know your breed well may just be the key to a successful partnership.

Knowing your breed dictates learning about their predisposition to health problems. The primary health problems associated with the Dachsie are slipped discs. The long, yet strong back of the breed can be compromised if the dog carries too much weight. This breed should be deep chested, yet fit and trim; it is essential to their good health and long life that they remain lean. Lumbar problems often lead to surgery that may simply be prevented through considerate exercise and careful nutrition.

Twice a year, the Dachshund Friendship Club sponsors a parade in NYC's Washington Square Park. They also circulate a Dachshund newsletter. They can be reached through their president:

The Dachshund Friendship Club  
Adrian Milton  
At United  
200 E.10TH Street, Box 817

NY, NY 10003

In addition the owner's of the dog lover's bookshop ([www.info@dogbooks.com](http://www.info@dogbooks.com)) are very helpful folks tuned in to the Dachsie world. My personal Dachsie favorite is a song written by Paul de Vries & Murray Weinstock. Weinstock is a professional pianist/singer/songwriter and the owner of Lovenotes Music, a music production company. The song is called "The Dachs Song." They play their song at the parade religiously belting out on accordion oom pa pa, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, oom pa pa and singing,

The relationship Mr. Weinstock developed over the past 13 years with his Dachshund, Sparky, not only led to his creation of The Dachs Song, but he is currently writing an entire CD of dog songs. Needless to say, "There's no other dog like a Dachshund"