

BREED PROFILE

THE VIZSLA *Heritage & Ability Combined*

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A pointing dog breed that is gaining significantly in American popularity is the Vizsla. These sleek, gracefully built dogs with short, golden-brown coats are finding ways into more and more field dog kennels. In a recent issue of a popular outdoors magazine, an article was written claiming that the "Vizsla," the pointing dog of Hungary, was the oldest pointing breed in the world. Upon investigation, one finds that the claim might be true. It seems the breed can be traced back 1,200 years to the fierce Magyar tribesmen, nomads of the European plains. Today, these svelte, honey-colored bird dogs are still uncommon in the U.S., but no one argues their ability in the field.

The first writing on the Vizsla ancestors was done by Magyar scribes around 890 A.D. Those wandering herdsmen are known to have descended from Ugarians, Finns and Monguls. They raised reindeer, cattle and horses. Their "camp dogs" were yellow-colored descendants of the mastiff and hound-type dogs picked up in their wanderings. One-thousand-year-old stone carvings in the Carpathian Mountains show early Magyar hunters with dogs closely resembling the Vizsla.

The Magyars specialized their dogs as hunting became secondary to agriculture. One thousand years ago, the bird hunting of those tribesmen was done with scenting dogs that flushed game birds so that domesticated falcons could attack and down the fowl. Thus it was that the honey-colored Vizsla evolved as the suitable dog for such pursuits. The pointer type had been born. In fact, "Vizsla" means "point" in the Hungarian language and "seek" in Turkish.

Its quiet movement and deliberate action made those prototype Vizslas perfect for driving pheasants and partridges. The Turks who invaded and occupied Hungary 500 years ago quickly took a liking to their victims' golden-brown dogs and refined them even further. In the late 1600s of northern Europe, successful firearms were developed. The dawn of the modern Vizsla as a pointing dog/gun dog had arrived. Those early gunmen with their primitive shotguns needed a dog that would stand still upon the scent of a hidden game bird, and allow the shooter to approach within optimum range.

Vizsla stock spread to Germany, Austria and England. The first Vizsla field trial was held near Budapest in 1882. German, English and Hungarian Vizslas participated. Later, pushed to the edge of extinction by two world wars fought on European soil, the breed made its way to the U.S. It has been reported that an American military serviceman, stationed in Italy, sent a Vizsla dam and her two pups back home in 1950. Ten years later, the American Kennel Club (AKC) gave the breed official status in this country.

The Vizsla breed in America has been further refined into a highly successful field dog. Vizsla owners say their dogs are methodical, tenacious hunters that rarely miss finding birds. But their critics say they lack the style shown by setters and other pointers. Most adult male Vizslas stand 21 to 24 inches high at the shoulders, weighing 40 to 55 pounds. Females are slightly smaller. Tails are usually artificially bobbed at about half-length. Their graceful appearance and beautiful golden coat make them prized dogs for home or field. Intelligent and supremely devoted, Vizslas are easily trained and respond well to lavish praise and loving attention.



ABOUT THE BREED

The Hungarian or Magyar Vizsla represents one of the best in sporting dogs and loyal companions and has a strong claim to being one of the smallest of the all-round pointer-retriever breeds. His size is one of the Vizsla's most attractive characteristics and through the centuries, he has held a unique position for a sporting dog, that of household companion and family dog. The Vizsla is not content to be "put in the kennel with the dogs" after the hunt and only reaches his fullest capacity when he is a member of the family he serves.

The Vizsla started arriving in the United States at the close of World War II. As interest in and devotion to the breed began to increase, owners formed the Vizsla Club of America in order to gain AKC recognition. As a result of registering foundation stock with the AKC, Vizsla owners were able to obtain official recognition in 1960 and the Vizsla became the 115th breed recognized by the American Kennel Club.

The Official Standard of the Vizsla breed has been developed and adopted by the Vizsla Club of America and its members. This information should be used as a guideline for understanding and appreciating the breed.

The Bird Dog Foundation, Inc. Home of the National Bird Dog Museum, the Retriever Museum, the Wildlife Heritage Center and the Field Trial Hall of Fame.
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