

Interview with the herding dog representative, Jürgen Henzler

THE SV ALWAYS RANKS FIRST

The SV and the German Shepherd occupy an important place in Jürgen Henzler's life. This is why he did not hesitate when in October 2015 he was temporarily offered the post of SV herding dog representative. In this interview, Jürgen Henzler will tell us about his experience.

By Roswitha Dannenberg

In late summer 2015, shortly before the national performance herding competition, everything suddenly began to change so fast. The death of the incumbent herding dog representative Wilfried Scheld shocked the SV. Shortly after, you were appointed temporary herding dog representative. Was it a jump into the deep end for you?

During the national performance herding competition (BLH) in 2015, there was a judges' meeting with our president Mr Meßler. After a certain amount of time, I was called into the meeting. When I got there, Mr Meßler immediately congratulated me. I asked him, 'For what? It's not my birthday today.' 'Right,' he said,

'but if you don't disagree now, we'd appoint you as temporary SV herding dog representative.' I almost didn't have any other choice, because the HD judges looked at me and said, 'Of course you're going to do that!' I had already enjoyed working as a HD representative in federal group 13 a lot.

How was your experience at this time? Even now I have a bit of a queasy feeling in my stomach, and it is an unfamiliar field of activity. Very suddenly, I belonged to the management and economic committee, and had already participated in one conference. I was very kindly and well received.

Please give us a short status quo: Are you still appointed temporarily as representative?

Yes, and I think at the next federal convention, I will be voted in for the period until the next official election. But so far, nobody has asked me. And I also haven't found anybody who would like to take over the job.

Did you know Mr Scheld personally? What characterised him and how did he shape the herding division in the SV association? Yes, I knew Wilfried

Scheld personally, but not privately. He knew exactly what he wanted and how he could keep his herders at it. As he was also a breeding judge, he covered this area pretty well, also, and I hope we have found a dignified successor in Mr Hausmann. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to meet him personally yet, but various telephone conversations have given me a good feeling.

You have been a member of the SV for 41 years. How did you come to the association? I learned about dog sports from my father. He had been first chairperson in the Hohenneuffen local group for 16 years, which made it very clear: his son would do dog sports. I was a member of the local group until 1993, and also had different charges there, such as breeding warden, training warden and protection service helper. At that time, I was also appointed learning helper of federal group 13, and fulfilled that task for 25 years. After moving to Sigmaringen, I joined the Mengen local group. There, I was first chairperson for eleven years. Unfortunately, there were interpersonal problems so I changed to the Mägerkingen local group. At the moment, my personal dog sports are coming up short, as I am also active in local politics. The SV, and especially the German Shepherds, mean a lot to me. I haven't been able to achieve great successes yet





Jürgen HENZLER as protection service helper in the 1980ies.



‘AROUND 1820, MIGRATORY HERDING HAD ITS PEAK, AND MIGRATION WITH SHEEP WAS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT HERDING DOGS.’

with my dogs as I have always been there for others and for the association. That's what's missing today. Many members only think of themselves and about how they can advance. The association then falls by the wayside. This is very bitter, and in coming years, more associations will have to close down as nobody is willing to take on any posts.

How did you come to performance herding and what relation do you bear to herding? What fascinates you about it?

During my time as first chairperson at the Mengen local group, I got to know shepherd master Georg Krieg. Georg Krieg was very successful and a multiple national performance herding winner. He motivated me to organize a federal group herding competition, as at the time, herding was coming up too short in the federal group. No sooner said than done: we organised a federal herding competition, and it was a complete success. Our at that time federal group's president at the time, Hans Rüdener, came to me and asked if I wanted to represent the shepherds in federal group 13. That was in 2005 and now we can see what came of it.

What is important in performance herding? Which characteristic traits can German Shepherds show there?

Trust and the relationship between dog and herder have to be very strong. The German Shepherds can prove their perseverance, independence and obedience in a brilliant way here.

The German Shepherd as a herding dog – that sounds like a historic pairing. To what extent is that true?

That is very right. Around 1820, migratory herding had its peak, and migration with sheep was not possible without herding dogs. Our association's founder, Max von Stephanitz, recognised this early on and founded the German Shepherd Association SV in order to improve the performance of the dogs.

Please give us an insight: what are the tasks of a herding dog representative? Where do you personally put your focus?

There is a lot to do: organisation of national performance herding, training and further education of the shepherds, selection and support of the aspiring judges, cultivating existing relationships in Germany and abroad, maintaining the value of herding in the SV and possibly extending it. I often hear that herding is very important and

PROFILE



The SV HD representative

Jürgen HENZLER, born in 1961, celebrated his forty-year membership in the SV in 2014. During his affiliation with the association, he had held many offices and fulfilled many tasks, among others, as breeding warden, learning helper, president of a local group and herding warden of the Württemberg federal group. Since October 2015, he has been the temporary HD representative. Jürgen HENZLER and his family live in Singmaringen-Jungau where he acts as a city councilman. He has named his kennel *vom Schuaschderbua* (English: *The Orphan*).



‘THERE IS NO OTHER EVENT IN THE SV WHICH ATTRACTS AS MANY “NON-DOG SPORTS PRACTICERS” AS HERDING.’

needs to be preserved and supported. And nevertheless, it is very difficult to find a place for a herding, be it for federal group herding or national performance herding. I’ve been very lucky now, as we have all locations for national performance herding competitions up to and including 2018, and I would like to thank again all federal group presidents for that. It is also difficult to gain young people in the judges’ area, as well as to find herders who are willing to participate in performance herding. Participating in performance herding means, in the first place, costs for the herder, as during his absence he needs a substitute herder to care for his herd, and herd it, during the day.

The national performance herding competition is an event that attracts many people also outside the SV. Do you share this observation?

That’s right. There is no other event in the SV that attracts as many ‘non-dog sports practitioners’ as herding. For that reason, it is very important – and I want to stress this – that the

basic conditions are right. There absolutely has to be an exhibition of different sheep breeds and a so-called petting zoo so the visitors’ children are occupied. And for the adult visitors, there also has to be something additional offered. Therefore, in my opinion, a herder market should be organised. Also, to show what can be gained from sheep. And for the sheep keeper, products for their animals need to be offered, of course. This way, specialists, too, will come to the event.

How complex is the organisation, thinking alone about finding a suitable herd and a fitting terrain?

The organisation really is very complex, as many factors play a part in it. The most important thing, of course, is finding a suitable herd that is herded on a daily basis and doesn’t just stand in its paddock, because there have to be mostly the same conditions from the first to the last starter. The veterinary inspection office has a strong say in the matter, as well as the regional nature conservation authority and the municipality. Then, I need a federal group and a local group and last but not least a regular terrain.

Let’s talk about the private individual Jürgen Henzler. What hobbies do you have when the SV isn’t your focus for once?

I have been a soldier for over 30 years and would have normally retired five months ago. But as there was no successor in sight, I was asked to extend the length of my service by two years, which I did. When this question was asked, I noticed that apart from the SV, there was nothing else in my life. My family and my garden balance out everything else. Since 2014, I have also been active in my home municipality, in the town council and as vice-mayor, as well as in the town council of Sigmaringen.

Is there still time for your own dogs?

But of course. At the moment I have one female dog. However, I do miss free time to do dog training myself. Because my motto – and this applies especially for my task as herding dog representative – has always been: ‘Do one thing, but do that one thing right and intensely.’

Thank you very much for the interview!