

Considering Adopting a Plott Hound

The breed's strong hunting instinct requires supervision.

Q. I have a chance to adopt a dog, but I'd like your professional advice. The dog is a Plott Hound and was a stray. I have one dog already -- Athena, a 12-year-old Golden Retriever-Rottweiler mix who is very obedient, listens well, and is just a great dog. We were hoping to get another dog so Athena would help teach it the great habits she has.

We live in a country-like setting with deer, turkey, raccoons, skunks, fox, ground hogs etc., but not any large game. From the articles I've read, the Plott is a hunting dog for large game. I've also read they're a good family dog with kids. Would this dog (who is about a year old) be able to stay in an electronically "fenced" yard with proper training?

Animals don't usually come into the back yard while Athena is out, but the deer do sometimes stand a short distance away. Would the Plott Hound want to hunt them down? Am I asking too much for a dog of this breed?

A. Plott Hounds have been intentionally bred to have an extremely strong hunting instinct. In fact, it's very likely that's exactly what this dog was doing when she strayed so far from home that she ended up in the shelter. It's also very possible that her hunt took her so many miles from home that her owner didn't even think to contact the shelter in your area to ask if she might be there.

With so many wild animals in your forest and the fearless deer that come close enough that even you notice they're there, it's extremely likely this hound would be tempted to hunt them.

Even with thorough training, an electronic fence can fail to keep a dog in when she's highly motivated to escape. Plott Hounds are able to ignore the pain of thorns, cuts, bruises, and other injuries when they're hot on the trail of a game animal. If this dog were determined to follow a scent, she'd probably be unfazed by the momentary pain of your "fence's" electric shock, if it bought her the freedom to hunt. Once outside your unseen electronic barrier, that might be the last time you'd ever see her.

If you really want to adopt this hound, you'd be wise to first install an actual visible fence that's both strong enough and high enough to keep her safely contained, even when tempted by the scent of game.