

Meet the Breed: Germany's Giant

Make room for the Giant Schnauzer – a big dog with a big heart.

Amy Fernandez

After 30 years in the breed, breeder Mary Ann Bisceglia has plenty of Giant Schnauzer stories. She once hosted guests visiting from overseas with their Giant Schnauzer. Bisceglia left the dog confined in the kitchen and went to dinner. When they returned, a window screen was missing and the dog was lounging around in the living room. "The next morning we put the clues together," Bisceglia says. "He had jumped over the kitchen gate, knocked out the screen, jumped through the window, relieved himself and jumped back in. He did everything possible to avoid having an accident in the house."

Seriously funny

Bisceglia, who heads Giant Schnauzer Club of America's breeders education committee, says that although the dogs have a great sense of humor, it's not a breed for casual owners. "These are big, all-purpose, working guard dogs. They have a lot of drive and ambition. If they are not channeled in the right direction, the dogs become frustrated." This can translate into the definitive canine delinquent.

Bisceglia describes the Giant as a breed for people who love their dogs and see them as family members. "They are intense, always watching you, checking you out," she says. "They learn your language and your gestures quickly."

Joshua Kiewel, a professional dog trainer, has been involved in tracking, schutzhund and carting since age 13 and has worked with Giant Schnauzers for 16 years. According to Kiewel, the breed is best described as "hard working, happy, and eager to please. They are calm and collected. At the same time, they possess energy on demand for whatever job or play activity necessary."

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