

## The Gray Ghost

**Bred with precision since the 19th century, the arrestingly handsome Weimaraner remains the gentleman's hunting dog.**

*Kim Campbell Thornton*

Most people are attracted to the Weimaraner for its silvery coat, striking eyes and aristocratic grace, but Virginia Alexander, a longtime breeder, had more pragmatic reasons for liking the breed. She admired its sleek smoothness, love of family and alert nature.

"As a sportswoman, I wanted a dog I could hunt that did not have long hair that collected all sorts of debris and ticks and fleas, that could come in the house with a good brushing, that would make me feel safe," Alexander says. "They are friendly and sweet, but most people are afraid of them. Inside they are very sweet, loving dogs that want to be your baby."

### The gentleman's hunter

The Weimaraner was created in the early 19th century by gentlemen at Germany's Weimar court. They wanted an all-around dog with courage, intelligence and good scenting ability that could hunt big game, such as deer, bears and wolves. Although their "recipe" is lost to history, it's thought that the breeders originally used the Bloodhound, English Pointer, German Shorthaired Pointer, blue Great Dane, Huhnerhund (or chicken dog, which had a silver-gray coat and pendant ears) and the Schweisshunde, a red dog known for its scenting ability. They created a dog with speed and stamina, as well as the versatility to switch to pointing and retrieving upland game birds and waterfowl after big game became scarce.

To this day in its homeland of Germany, the Weimaraner is used on fur and feather and as a retriever, well known for water work. But the American Kennel Club doesn't allow the Weimaraner to compete in retrieving trials, Alexander says. Instead, the breed has made a name for itself as a personal hunting dog and well-loved companion.

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