

April 2026



PHEASANTS FOREVER CHINOOK CHAPTER SPRING NEWSLETTER

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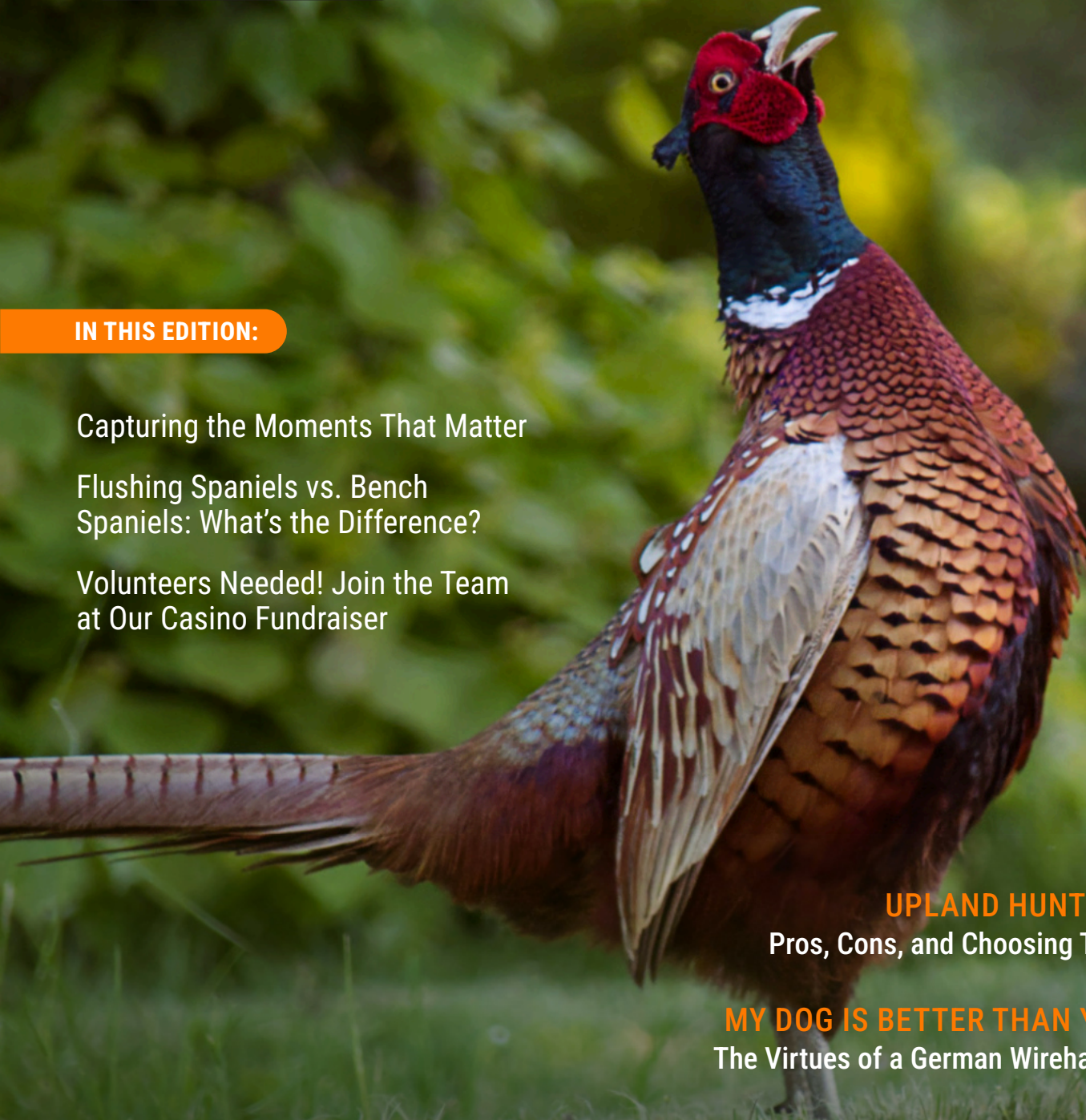
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The Virtues of a German Wirehaired Pointer





MEMBER ARTICLE

Capturing the Moments That Matter

There's an undeniable emotional component to hunting, training, and spending time outdoors. Whether it's the joy of a successful flush, the satisfaction of watching your dog work a field, or the camaraderie with fellow hunters, photos and videos capture emotions that words often fail to express.

In many ways, the images and videos you capture are as much about the feeling of the moment as they are about the physical action. It's about the bond between a dog and its handler, the quiet stillness of the morning fog before the hunt, or the intense focus required in the field. These visual memories become more than just snapshots—they are cherished mementos of time well spent in the wild.

In a sense, pictures and videos act as a return ticket to the past, not only for you but for your friends and family as well. They help preserve the essence of these experiences, allowing you to relive the adventure, share it with others, and reflect on the journey.

While it's important to live fully in the moment, taking the time to capture these moments ensures that the memories are never lost.

**Avid Uplander
Robert Mather**



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Join the Team at Our Casino Fundraiser

Support Chinook PF and help make a difference by volunteering at our upcoming casino fundraiser at the Medicine Hat Lodge. This important event, run through Copper Coulee, helps raise funds for local conservation projects and chapter initiatives.

Chinook's next casino dates are:
**Wednesday, June 24th and
Thursday, June 25th, 2026.**

Volunteers are needed for both
afternoon and evening shifts.

If you can lend a hand, please contact **Curtis Ensminger** at censminger@shaw.ca



MEMBER ARTICLE

Upland Hunting Guns: Pros, Cons, and Choosing The Right Fit

It's a cool, crisp, fall morning. Dogs quartering in front, partner walking to the side, and a big boisterous rooster erupts from the cover. What firearm do you want in your hands at this particular moment – and why?

Let's go through the textbook examples of the various types of upland gun, the reasons why you might want one instead of the others, and then what I personally carry and my reasons for doing so.

The Various Forms of the Upland Hunting Gun

The Single Shot is the perfect tool for the new upland hunter. It's lightweight, very affordable, almost foolproof, and the safest action on the list. The break action is easy to tell when it's safe, and there's no risk of an accidental follow up shot. Having only one chance also teaches a new shooter to make that first shot count. For the serious upland hunter though, the

downsides are obvious. (My first shotgun was a single shot 12 gauge Cooney with an external cocking hammer!)

The Pump Action is tough, inexpensive, virtually indestructible, and operates flawlessly in the most miserable weather. It's a great gun for geese in the morning, upland in the afternoon, ducks in the evening, and not being cleaned for years on end. The downsides are that it's hard for others to tell when it's safe, follow up shots take slightly longer, and it takes more effort to load and unload which can lead to situations where the gun remains loaded when it really should be empty. i.e. fence crossings, mid-hunt conversations, etc.

The Semi-Automatic offers three quick shots, reduced recoil, and versatility. It is pretty much the only gun that I see in the hands of a serious waterfowler, and the newer versions offer

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various recoil reducing technologies that really work. Like the pump action though, it's very difficult to tell if it's safe and it takes time to load and unload. Another downside specific to the semi-auto is that they have complicated mechanisms that can be a bit finicky. Typically, they are the most prone to breakdown and the most sensitive to dirt, dust and weather.

The Side by Side is the classic break action upland firearm offering simplicity and reliability in a compact, lightweight form with excellent pointability for instinctive shooting. It's easy to break open and therefore easy for others to know that the gun is safe even when approaching from a distance. Having two barrels also allows the option of different chokes in each barrel. Offerings range from very budget friendly to very budget unfriendly, with

some high-end examples costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. Downsides are the two-shot limit, and a tendency to have more felt recoil and muzzle jump. Some users also feel the wider, two barrel, sight picture results in a less precise point to the target.

The Over / Under is another break action firearm with very similar pros and cons to the side by side, so let's focus on the differences between them. The over /under tends to be slightly heavier than a side by side, but still relatively lightweight. They offer a more precise, single barrel sight picture, and they don't tend to have the issues with felt recoil and muzzle jump. That said, an over / under will still typically have more felt recoil than the newer semi-autos with their various recoil reduction systems.

Choosing The Perfect Fit

Over the years I have used every form of shotgun described above, but I haven't hunted upland with anything but a sub-gauge over / under for decades. My go-to gun is a 20 gauge Beretta 687 EL, and I have four main reasons for that choice:

Safety – Unless I'm in active pursuit of something, I try to keep the gun broken open so that it's easy for others to see that it's safe.


Lightweight – I put on a lot of boot miles each fall, and the lighter the gun, the easier it is to maintain a safe upward gun position. An extra pound in the hands makes a big difference over the course of a day.

Sporting – Having only 2 shots seems to improve the odds for our feathered quarry. I don't typically attempt to down more than one bird at a time anyway, and if I miss a bird with both shots – he deserves to win that encounter.

Classic Form – Each to his own for sure, but I find the simplicity of a nicely engraved break action firearm with a fine Turkish Walnut stock to be a thing of beauty.

Now for a closing confession – by the time this article goes to print, there should be a “new to me” Boss & Co 16 gauge side by side residing in the safe. Only time will tell where that one fits in the rotation.

Written by Kevin Burton



MEMBER ARTICLE

My Dog Is Better Than Your Dog: The Virtues of a German Wirehaired Pointer

Among the pantheon of great upland hunting breeds, few stand taller—or work harder—than the **German Wirehaired Pointer**. Known simply as the “GWP,” or by their German name, the **Deutsch-Drahthaar (often called a “Drahthaar”)**, this versatile breed has earned its place in pheasant country not only through remarkable field performance but also through deep loyalty and steadfast companionship.

A Partner, Not Just a Dog

Spend a day afield with a German Wirehaired Pointer and you’ll quickly understand what makes the breed special. Their loyalty isn’t quiet or passive—it’s active, alert, and personal. These dogs don’t just follow their handler; they work with them. A GWP’s expressive eyes seem to ask, “Where to next?” and their energy rarely wanes, even after miles of walking cut corn and cattails.

Whether it’s in the pre-dawn truck ride or the long hike back to the tailgate, the GWP—or Drahthaar—is more than a hunting companion. They’re a member of the family who thrives on connection and purpose.

Endurance for the Long Haul

Stamina is one of the defining virtues of this breed. Bred for versatility in the demanding landscapes of Europe, the German Wirehaired

Pointer was designed to cover ground, push through thick cover, and keep working long after other dogs have called it a day.

Their dense, wiry coat protects them from burrs, frost, and water alike—an all-weather armor that keeps them hunting strong through the chill of November or the damp of spring training. However, if there’s one **chink in their armor**, it’s **extreme heat**. These dogs are built for rugged endurance, not high temperatures, and they can overheat quickly in warm weather.

If you’re hunting in conditions above 15°C (about 60°F), it’s highly recommended to stay near a **cool body of water** so your dog can take regular breaks to cool down. **Stagnant ponds won’t do**, as they typically reach the same temperature as the air. Clean, moving water—such as a creek or spring-fed pond—is ideal for keeping your GWP safe, hydrated, and ready to hunt another day.

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In the field, a GWP's drive is tireless, their determination unwavering. When the sun starts to sink low and your legs are begging for rest, your Wirehair will still be out front, nose down, searching for that last bird.

Game-Finding Instincts That Never Quit

Ask any seasoned bird hunter what sets the GWP apart, and most will say the same thing: *they find birds other dogs miss*. The German Wirehaired Pointer combines a keen nose with an intelligent, methodical approach to scent. They learn quickly how pheasants run and hide, adapting their patterns to hold birds that might otherwise slip away. Watching a GWP lock into a point—a taut, focused statue of muscle and instinct—is one of upland hunting's great pleasures.

When it comes to recovery, their natural tracking instincts shine. A wounded rooster rarely escapes a determined Wirehair; they'll work tirelessly until the job is done, honoring the bird and the hunt with a sense of purpose that feels almost human.

Not for the Inexperienced or Inactive

For all their virtues, the German Wirehaired Pointer—like its Drahthaar cousin—is not the right breed for everyone. I would **not recommend a GWP** to a first-time sporting dog owner or to anyone who doesn't have the time to properly train and exercise their dog. These dogs are extremely intelligent and require constant mental and physical stimulation.

When left alone or under-challenged, their bright minds can turn that energy toward mischief—

chewing, digging, or finding their own “projects” around the house. A bored Wirehair can be as destructive as a tired one is obedient. But for those willing to invest the time, training, and companionship these dogs crave, the rewards are immeasurable.

A Life Beyond the Field

At home, the GWP's loyalty and intelligence transform from hunting traits into endearing companionship. They're affectionate but discerning—bonding closely with their people and keeping a watchful eye on their household. A day spent hunting or training is their greatest joy, but they're just as content lying by the fire, head resting on their hunter's boots, dreaming of the next flush.

The Complete Upland Companion

In an era when specialization often rules the sporting world, the German Wirehaired Pointer—or Drahthaar—remains refreshingly versatile. They retrieve, point, and track with equal passion. They'll chase roosters through cattails one day, ducks across a marsh the next. And through it all, they'll look to you for direction, affirmation, and partnership.

For those who value loyalty, endurance, and game-finding instinct wrapped into one wiry, hard-working package, the German Wirehaired Pointer is more than a hunting dog—it's a way of life.

Written by Robert Mather



MEMBER ARTICLE

Flushing Spaniels vs. Bench/Show Spaniels: What's the Difference?

Flushing spaniels and bench spaniels often come from the same breeds, but they are bred for very different reasons. For upland hunters, understanding that difference matters when choosing a dog that can handle long days chasing pheasants in real-world conditions. While both types may look similar at first glance, their abilities, drive, and durability in the field can vary greatly.

Flushing spaniels are bred and trained to hunt. Their job is simple but demanding: work close, push through cover, find birds, and flush them

cleanly into the air within gun range. To do this well, they need strong noses, high energy, grit, and the desire to keep hunting no matter the conditions. These dogs are expected to bust cattails, crash thick CRP, and keep working in wind, snow, rain, or heat. Because of these demands, breeders of flushing spaniels focus on performance, stamina, and natural hunting instinct rather than appearance. A good flushing spaniel is judged by what it does in the field, not how it looks standing still.

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Bench spaniels, on the other hand, are bred mainly for the show ring. In conformation shows, dogs are judged on how closely they match a written breed standard. That standard emphasizes traits like body structure, coat, movement, and overall appearance. Bench spaniels are often selected for heavier coats, fuller features, and calm, controlled behavior that looks good under a judge's eye.

Over time, these breeding priorities have created noticeable differences between bench and flushing spaniels. Flushing spaniels tend to be leaner, more athletic, and harder driven, while bench spaniels may carry more coat and have lower energy levels.

A common question hunters ask is whether a bench spaniel can hunt. The answer is sometimes. Some bench-bred dogs still have hunting instincts and can be trained to flush birds, especially with consistent exposure and patient handling. However, many lack the stamina, intensity, and durability found in dogs bred from strong working lines. On long pheasant hunts, especially in heavy cover or tough weather, those differences often become clear.

For hunters, the takeaway is straightforward. If your goal is consistent performance in the pheasant fields, a flushing spaniel bred from proven hunting stock is usually the better choice. Bench spaniels have their place in the show world, but flushing spaniels are built for the birds, the cover, and the kind of hunting Pheasants Forever members value. These dogs are partners in the field, not accessories, and hunters depend on them when birds are running and conditions are rough. That partnership is what makes spaniel hunting effective, ethical, and rewarding season after season.

Written by John Dzerdz



PHEASANTS FOREVER CHINOOK CHAPTER

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