

# The AKC Approved Official Standard for the Australian Shepherd

## ***General Appearance***

The Australian Shepherd is an intelligent working dog of strong herding and guarding instincts. He is a loyal companion and has the stamina to work all day. He is well balanced, slightly longer than tall of medium size and bone, with coloring that offers variety and individuality. He is attentive and animated, lithe and agile, solid and muscular without cloddiness. He has a coat of moderate length and coarseness. He has a docked or natural bobbed tail.

## ***Size, Proportion, Substance***

**Size**—The preferred height for males is 20-23 inches and females 18-21 inches. Quality is not to be sacrificed in favor of size. **Proportion** Measuring from the breastbone to rear of thigh and from top of the withers to the ground the Australian Shepherd is slightly longer than tall. **Substance**—Solidly built with moderate bone. Structure in the male reflects masculinity without coarseness. Bitches appear feminine without being slight of bone.

## ***Head***

The head is clean cut, strong and dry. Overall size should be in proportion to the body. The muzzle is equal in length or slightly shorter than the back skull. Viewed from the side the topline of the back skull and muzzle form parallel planes, divided by a moderate, well defined stop. The muzzle tapers little from base to nose and is rounded at the tip.

**Expression**—Showing attentiveness and intelligence, alert and eager. Gaze should be keen but friendly. Eyes are brown, blue, amber or any variation or combination thereof, including flecks and marbling. Almond shaped, not protruding nor sunken. The blue merles and blacks have black pigmentation on eye rims. The red merles and reds have liver (brown) pigmentation on eye rims.

**Ears**—are triangular of moderate size and leather, set high at the head. At full attention they break forward and over, or to the side as a rose ear. Prick ears and hanging ears are severe faults.

**Skull**—Top flat to slightly domed, it may show a slight occipital protuberance. Length and width are equal. Moderate well-defined stop. Muzzle tapers little from base to nose and is rounded at the tip. Nose Blue merles and blacks have black pigmentation on the nose (and lips). Red merles and reds have liver (brown) pigmentation on the nose (and lips). On the merles it is permissible to have small pink spots, however they should not exceed 25% of the nose on dogs over one year of age which is a serious fault. **Teeth**—A full complement of strong white teeth should meet in a scissors bite or may meet in a level bite. Disqualification Undershot. Overshot greater than 1/8 inch. Loss of contact caused by short center incisors in an otherwise correct bite shall not be judged undershot. Teeth broken or missing by accident shall not be penalized.

### ***Neck, Topline, Body***

Neck is strong of moderate length slightly arched at the crest, fitting well into the shoulders.

**Topline**—Back is straight and strong, level and firm from withers to hip joints. The croup is moderately sloped. Chest is not broad but is deep with the lowest point reaching the elbow. The ribs are well sprung and long, neither barrel chested nor slab-sided. The underline shows a moderate tuckup. Tail is straight, docked or naturally bobbed, not to exceed four inches in length.

### ***Forequarters***

**Shoulders**—Shoulder blades are long, flat, fairly close set at the withers and well laid back. The upper arm, which should be relatively the same length as the shoulder blade, attaches at an approximate right angle to the shoulder line with forelegs dropping straight, on a perpendicular to the ground.

Legs straight and strong. Bone is strong, oval rather than round, Pastern is medium length and very slightly sloped. Front dew claws may be removed. Feet are oval, compact with close knit, well arched toes. Pads are thick and resilient.

### ***Hindquarters***

The width of the hindquarters is equal to the width of the forequarters at the shoulders. The angulation of the pelvis and upper thigh corresponds to the angulation of the shoulder blade and upper arm forming an approximate right angle. Stifles are clearly defined, hock joints moderately bent. The hocks are short, perpendicular to the ground and parallel to each other when viewed from the rear. Rear dew claws must be removed. Feet are oval, compact with close knit, well arched toes. Pads are thick and resilient.

### ***Coat***

Hair is of medium texture, straight to wavy, weather resistant and of medium length. The undercoat varies in quantity with variations in climate. Hair is short and smooth on the head, ears, front of forelegs and below the hocks. Backs of forelegs and britches are moderately feathered. There is a moderate mane and frill, more pronounced in dogs than in bitches. Non-typical coats are severe faults.

### ***Color***

Blue merle, black, red merle, red—all with or without white markings and/or tan (copper) points, with no order of preference. The hairline of a white collar does not exceed the point of the withers at the skin. White is acceptable on the neck (either in part or as a full collar) chest, legs, muzzle underparts, blaze on head and white extension from underpart up to four inches measuring from a horizontal line at the elbow. White on the head should not predominate and the eyes must be fully surrounded by color and pigment. Merles characteristically become darker with increasing age. Disqualifications—White body splashes, which means white on body between withers and tail, on sides between elbows and back of hindquarters on all colors.

### ***Gait***

The Australian Shepherd has a smooth, free and easy gait. He exhibits great agility of movement with a well-balanced, ground covering stride. Fore and hind legs move straight and parallel with the center line of the body. As speed increases, the feet (front and rear) converge toward the center line of gravity of the dog while the back remains firm and level. The Australian Shepherd must be agile and able to change direction or alter gait instantly.

### ***Temperament***

The Australian Shepherd is an intelligent active dog with an even disposition, he is good natured, seldom quarrelsome. They may be somewhat reserved in initial meetings. Faults—Any display of shyness, fear or aggression is to be severely penalized.

### ***Disqualifications***

Undershot. Overshot greater than 1/8 inch.

White body splashes, which means white on body between withers and tail, on sides between elbows and back of hindquarters in all colors.