
Australian Shepherd

General Appearance

The Australian Shepherd is a well-balanced dog of medium size and bone. He is attentive and animated, showing strength and stamina combined with unusual agility. Slightly longer than tall, he has a coat of moderate length and coarseness with colouring that offers variety and individuality in each specimen. An identifying characteristic is his natural or docked bobtail. In each sex, masculinity or femininity is well defined.

Character

The Australian Shepherd is intelligent, primarily a working dog of strong herding and guarding instincts. He is an exceptional companion. He is versatile and easily trained, performing his assigned tasks with great style and enthusiasm. He is reserved with strangers but does not exhibit shyness. Although an aggressive, authoritative worker, viciousness toward people or animals is intolerable.

Head

Clean-cut, strong, dry and in proportion to the body. The **topskull** is flat to slightly rounded, its length and width each equal to the length of the muzzle which is in balance and proportioned to the rest of the head. The **muzzle** tapers slightly to a rounded tip. The stop is moderate but well defined. **Teeth:** A full complement of strong, white teeth meet in a scissors bite. An even bite is a fault. Teeth broken or missing by accident are not penalized. Disqualification: Undershot bites; overshot bites exceeding 1/8 inches (.32 cm). **Eyes:** Very expressive, showing attentiveness and intelligence. Clear, almond-shaped, and of moderate size, set a little obliquely, neither prominent nor sunken, with pupils dark, well-defined and perfectly positioned. Colour is brown, blue, amber, or any variation or combination including flecks and marbling. **Ears:** Set on high at the side of the head, triangular and slightly rounded at the tip, of moderate size with length measured by bringing the tip of the ear around to the inside corner of the eye. The ears, at full attention, break slightly forward and over from one-quarter (1/4) to one-half (1/2) above the base. Prick ears and hound-type ears are severe faults.

Neck and Body

The neck is firm, clean and in proportion to the body. It is of medium length and slightly arched at the crest, setting well into the shoulders.

The body is firm and muscular. The topline appears level at a natural four-square stance. The chest is deep and strong with ribs well-sprung. The loin is strong and broad when viewed from the top. The bottom line carries well back with a moderate tuck-up. The croup is moderately sloping, the ideal being 30 degrees from the horizontal. Tail is straight, not to exceed 4 inches (10.2 cm), natural bobtail or docked.

Forequarters

The shoulder blades (scapula) are long and flat, close set at the withers, approximately two fingers width at a natural stance and are well laid back at an angle approximating forty-five (45) degrees to the ground. The upper arm (humerus) is attached at an approximate right angle to the shoulder line with forelegs dropping straight, perpendicular to the ground. The elbow joint is equidistant from the ground to the withers. The legs are straight and powerful. Pasterns are short, thick and strong, but still flexible, showing a slight angle when viewed from the side. Feet are oval shaped, compact, with close-knit, well-arched toes. Pads are thick and resilient; nails short and strong. Dewclaws may be removed.

Hindquarters

Width of hindquarters approximately equal to the width of the forequarters at the shoulders. The angulation of the pelvis and the upper thigh (femur) 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 metatarsi are short, perpendicular to the ground and parallel to each other when viewed from the rear. Feet are oval shaped, compact, with close-knit, well-arched toes. Pads are thick and resilient; nails short and strong. Rear dewclaws are removed.

Coat

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

Colour

All colours are strong, clear and rich. The recognized colours are blue merle, red (liver) merle, solid black and solid red (liver) all with or without white markings and/or tan (copper) points with no order of preference. The blue merle and black have black pigmentation on nose, lips and eye-rims; the red (liver) merle and red (liver) have liver pigmentation on nose, lips and eye-rims. Butterfly nose should not be faulted under one year of age. On all colours, the areas surrounding the ears and eyes are dominated by colour other than white. The hairline of a white collar does not exceed the point of the withers.

Gait

Smooth, free and easy; exhibiting agility and 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, both front and rear, converge toward the center line of gravity of the dog, while topline remains firm and level.

Size

Preferred height at the withers for males is 20-23 inches (50.8-58.4 cm); that for females is 18-21 inches (45.7-53.3 cm), however, quality is not to be sacrificed in favor of size.

Other Disqualifications

- Monorchidism and cryptorchidism.
- Other than recognized colours.
- White body splashes.
- Dudley nose.
- Undershot bite; overshot bites exceeding 1/8 inches