

AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD BREED STANDARD

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 15, 1977

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 coloring 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 guardian 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 top skull 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.

(A) **TEETH:** A full compliment of strong, white teeth meet in a scissors bite. An even bite is a fault. Teeth broken or missing by accident are not penalized.

Disqualifications: Undershot bites; overshot bites exceeding 1/8 inches.

(B) **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. Color is brown, blue, amber, or any variation or combination including flecks and marbling.

(C) **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 thirty (30) degrees from the horizontal. Tail is straight, not to exceed four (4) inches, 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 approximately 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 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 quantity 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.

COLOR: All colors are strong, clear and rich. The recognized colors 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. Reds and red merles have liver pigmentation on nose, lips and eye rims. Butterfly nose should not be faulted under one year of age. On all colors the areas surrounding the ears and eyes are dominated by color other than white. The hairline of a white collar does not exceed the point at the withers.

Disqualifications: Other than recognized colors. White body splashes. Dudley nose.

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

SIZE: Preferred height at the withers for males is 20 to 23 inches; that for females is 18 to 21 inches, however, quality is not to be sacrificed in favor of size.

Other Disqualification: Monorchidism and cryptorchidism.