

2013 AKC, ASCA, FCI and The Kennel Club (U.K.) Australian Shepherd Breed Standards Comparison Table

by Nannette L. Newbury

AKC Breed Standard	2013 ASCA Standard	FCI Standard	The Kennel Club (UK)
	<p>Introduction</p> <p>First and foremost, the Australian Shepherd is a true working stockdog, and anything that detracts from his usefulness as such is undesirable. The most important breed characteristics are overall moderation in size and bone, balance with correct proportions, and sound movement.</p>	<p>Utilization</p> <p>Farm and ranch shepherd dog</p>	<p>A Breed Standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. From time to time certain conditions or exaggerations may be considered to have the potential to affect dogs in some breeds adversely, and judges and breeders are requested to refer to the Breed Watch section of the Kennel Club website here http://www.the-kennel-club.org.uk/services/public/breeds/watch for details of any such current issues. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as undesirable or highly undesirable it is strongly recommended that it should not be rewarded in the show ring.</p>

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Brief Historical Summary

While there are many theories as to the origin of the Australian Shepherd, the breed as we know it today developed exclusively in the United States. The Australian Shepherd was given its name because of the association with Basque Shepherders who came to the United States from Australia in the 1800's.

The Australian Shepherd's popularity rose steadily with the boom of western horseback riding after World War II, which became known to the general public via rodeos, horse shows, movies, and television shows. Their inherent versatile and trainable personality made them assets to American farms and ranches. The American stockman continued the development of the breed, maintaining its versatility, keen intelligence, strong herding instincts, and eye catching appearance that originally won their admiration.

Although each individual is unique in colour and markings, all Australian Shepherds show an unsurpassed devotion to their families. Their many attributes have guaranteed the Australian Shepherd's continued popularity.

General Appearance	General Appearance	General Appearance	General Appearance
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The Australian Shepherd is well balanced, slightly longer than tall, of medium size and bone, with colouring that offers variety and individuality.</p> <p>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 tail.</p>	<p>Well balanced, length slightly greater than height. Medium sized, muscular with moderate bone. Expression alert and keen. Masculinity and femininity well defined.</p>

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Important Proportions

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.

Solidly built with moderate bone. Structure in the male reflects masculinity without coarseness. Bitches appear feminine without being slight of bone.

<p>Size, Proportion, Substance</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Substance—Solidly built with moderate bone. Structure in the male reflects masculinity without coarseness. Bitches appear feminine without being slight of bone.</p>	<p>Size</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Size</p> <p><u>Height at the withers</u> : The preferred height for males is 20-23 inches (51-58 cm), females 18-21 inches (46-53 cm). Quality is not to be sacrificed in favour of size.</p>	<p>Size</p> <p>Dogs: 51-58 cms (20-23 inches). Bitches: 46-53 cms (18-21 inches).</p>
<p>Temperament</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Faults— Any display of shyness, fear or aggression is to be severely penalized.</p>	<p>Character</p> <p>The Australian Shepherd is primarily a working dog of strong herding and guardian instincts. He is an intelligent, 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. This unusually versatile stockdog works with the power and quickness to control difficult cattle as well as the ability to move sheep without unnecessary roughness. Although an aggressive, authoritative worker, viciousness toward people or animals is intolerable.</p>	<p>Behaviour/Temperament</p> <p>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. With an even disposition, he is good natured, seldom quarrelsome. He may be somewhat reserved in initial meetings.</p>	<p>Characteristics</p> <p>Intelligent working dog with herding and guarding instincts. Great stamina, loyal, attentive and animated. Lithe, agile and able to change speed and direction with ease.</p> <p>Temperament Even disposition. May show initial reserve, never shy or aggressive.</p>

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<p>Head</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Head</p> <p>The head is 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. The muzzle is of medium width and depth and tapers gradually to a rounded tip, without appearing heavy or snipey. Lips are close fitting, meeting at the mouthline. The toplines of the muzzle and top skull appear close to parallel. The stop is moderate but well defined.</p>	<p>Head</p> <p>The head is clean cut, strong and dry. Overall size should be in proportion to the body.</p>	<p>Head and Skull</p> <p>In proportion to body. Clean cut. Dry. Muzzle equal to, or a little shorter than length of skull, tapering slightly to a rounded tip. Skull flat to slightly rounded, approximately equal in length and width. Moderate, well defined stop. Nose and eye rims: black in blue merles and blacks; shades of brown in red merles and reds. Poor pigmentation undesirable over one year of age.</p>
<p>Expression</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Eyes</p> <p>(B) EYES: The eyes are very expressive, showing attentiveness and intelligence. They are clear, almond-shaped, of moderate size, and set a little obliquely, neither prominent nor sunken. The pupils are dark, well defined, and perfectly positioned. Eye color is brown, blue, amber; or any variation or combination, including flecks and marbling. All eye colors are acceptable in combination with all coat colors.</p> <p>FAULTS: Any deviation from almond-shaped eyes.</p>	<p>Eyes</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Expression : Showing attentiveness and intelligence, alert and eager. Gaze should be keen but friendly.</p>	<p>Eyes</p> <p>Expressive, almond shaped, set obliquely with tight fitting rims. Brown, blue or amber, or combination including flecks and marbling.</p>
<p>Skull</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>Cranial Region: Skull</p> <p>Top flat to slightly domed. It may show a slight occipital protuberance. Length and width are equal. Stop: Moderate, well-defined.</p>	

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Facial Region

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.

Muzzle : 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.

Teeth	Teeth	Jaws/Teeth	Mouth
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.	(A) TEETH: A full complement of strong white teeth meet in a scissors bite. A level bite is a fault. Teeth broken or missing by accident are not penalized. All other missing teeth should be faulted to the degree that they deviate from a full complement of 42 teeth. Disqualifications: Undershot bite, Overshot bite, Wry Mouth.	A full complement of strong white teeth should meet in a scissors bite or may meet in a pincer bite.	Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e., the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

Ears	Ears	Ears	Ears
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.	(C) EARS: The ears are set high on the side of the head, are triangular, of moderate size and slightly rounded at the tip. The tip of the ear reaches to, but not further than, the inside corner of the nearest eye. At full attention, the ears should lift from one-quarter (1/4) to one half (1/2) above the base and break forward or slightly to the side. Severe Faults: Prick ears; overly large ears; low set ears with no lift from the base.	Triangular, of moderate size and leather, set high on the head. At full attention they break forward and over, or to the side as a rose ear.	Triangular; of moderate size and thickness with a slightly rounded tip. Set high on the side of the head. When alert, brought forward and carried semi-erect, with half to three quarters of the ear breaking forward or to side.

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<p>Neck, Topline, Body</p> <p>Neck is strong of moderate length slightly arched at the crest, fitting well into the shoulders.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Neck and Body</p> <p>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 bottom line carries well back with a moderate tuck-up. The chest is deep and strong with ribs well sprung. The loin is strong and broad when viewed from the top. The croup is moderately sloping. The tail is straight, not to exceed four (4) inches, natural bobtail or docked.</p>	<p>Neck</p> <p>Strong, of moderate length, slightly arched at the crest, fitting well into the shoulders.</p> <p>Body <u>Top line</u> : Back straight and strong, level and firm from withers to hip joints. <u>Croup</u> : Moderately sloping. <u>Chest</u> : Not broad, but deep with the lowest point reaching the elbow. <u>Ribs</u> : Well sprung and long, neither barrel chested nor slab-sided. <u>Underline and Belly</u> : Shows a moderate tuckup.</p> <p>Tail Straight, naturally long or naturally short. When docked (in countries where this practice is not forbidden), or naturally short, not to exceed 10 cm.</p>	<p>Neck</p> <p>Clean, without throatiness. Moderate length, strong, slightly arched; fitting smoothly into shoulders.</p> <p>Body Length from point of shoulder to point of buttock slightly greater than height at withers. Strong, with firm level topline. Chest deep, of moderate width, with brisket reaching to elbow. Ribs well sprung and carried well back. Loin strong and broad. Croup moderately sloping. Moderate tuck-up.</p>
<p>Forequarters</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Forequarters</p> <p>The shoulder blades (scapula) are well laid back, with the upper arm (humerus) slightly longer than the shoulder blade. Both the upper arm and shoulder blade are well muscled. The forelegs are straight and strong, perpendicular to the ground, with moderate bone. The point of the elbow is set under the withers and is equidistant from the withers to the ground. 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.</p>	<p>Limbs: Forequarters</p> <p><u>Shoulders</u> : Shoulder-blades 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, perpendicular to the ground. <u>Legs</u> : Straight and strong. Bone strong, oval rather than round. <u>Metacarpus (Pastern)</u> : Medium length and very slightly sloping. Front dewclaws may be removed. <u>Feet</u> : Oval, compact, with close-knit, well-arched toes. Pads thick and resilient.</p>	<p>Forequarters</p> <p>Shoulder blades long and flat, well laid back. Upper arms of comparable length and angulation. Height to the elbow is half the height of the dog at the withers. Forearms straight from all sides with moderate oval bone. Slightly sloping pasterns of medium length.</p>

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<p>Hindquarters</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Hindquarters</p> <p>HINDQUARTERS: Width of hindquarters is approximately equal to the width of the forequarters at the shoulder. The angulation of the pelvis and upper thigh (femur) corresponds to the angulation of the shoulder blade and upper arm. The upper and lower thigh are well muscled. 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.</p>	<p>Hindquarters</p> <p><u>General appearance</u> : 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. <u>Stifle</u> : Clearly defined. <u>Hock joints</u> : Moderately bent. <u>Hocks</u> : Short, perpendicular to the ground and parallel to each other when viewed from the rear. No rear dewclaws. <u>Feet</u> : Oval, compact with close-knit, well-arched toes. Pads thick and resilient.</p>	<p>Hindquarters</p> <p>Approximately equal in width to forequarters at the shoulders. Angulation of pelvis and upper thighs reflects that between scapulae and upper arms. Stifles moderately angulated. Hocks well let down, with rear pasterns perpendicular to ground and parallel when viewed from rear.</p> <p>Feet Oval, compact with well arched toes and thick pads.</p>
<p>Coat</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Coat</p> <p>The coat is of medium length and texture, straight to slightly wavy, and weather resistant. The undercoat varies in quantity 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 and breeches are moderately full. There is a moderate mane, more pronounced in dogs than bitches. The Australian Shepherd is a working dog and is to be shown with a natural coat.</p> <p>Severe Faults: Non-typical coats such as excessively long; overabundant/profuse; wiry; or curly.</p>	<p>Coat Hair</p> <p>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 breeches are moderately feathered. There is a moderate mane and frill, more pronounced in dogs than in bitches.</p>	<p>Coat</p> <p>Medium length and texture, straight to slightly wavy, weather resistant with undercoat. Short hair on head, ears front of forelegs and below hock joints. Back of legs moderately feathered. Moderate mane, more pronounced in dogs than bitches.</p>

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Color	Color	Colour	Colour
<p>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.</p> <p>Disqualifications—White body splashes, which means white on body between withers and tail, on sides between elbows and back of hindquarters on all colors.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Disqualifications: Other than recognized colors. White body splashes. Dudley nose.</p>	<p>Blue merle, black, red merle, red – all with or without white markings and/or tan markings, 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 (10 cm), measuring from a horizontal line at the elbow. White on the head should not predominate, and the eyes must be fully surrounded by colour and pigment. Merles characteristically become darker with increasing age.</p>	<p>Blue merle, black, red merle, red, all with or without tan points. All colours should be strong, clear and rich. White should not dominate the head. On all colours the areas covering and surrounding the ears and eyes are dominated by a colour other than white.</p> <p>May have white as follows: full or part collar not extending beyond point of withers at the skin * chest * muzzle * moderate blaze * underparts * on fore-legs * on hind-legs, preferably not extending above the hock joint</p>

Gait	Gait	Gait	Gait/Movement
<p>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.</p>	<p>Smooth, free, and easy, exhibiting agility of movement with a well-balanced natural stride. As speed increases, both front and rear feet converge equally toward the centerline of gravity beneath the body. The top line remains firm and level. When viewed from the side the trot is effortless, exhibiting facility of movement rather than a hard driving action. Exaggerated reach and drive at the trot are not desirable. Gait faults shall be penalized according to the degree of deviation from the ideal.</p>	<p>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 centre line of the body. As speed increases, the feet (front and rear) converge toward the centre 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.</p>	<p>Agile, smooth, free and easy, with moderate length of stride without any exaggeration. Fore and hind limbs move straight and true but should converge at speed. Topline should remain firm and level.</p>

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<p>Disqualifications</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Disqualifications</p> <p>Undershot bites; overshot bites. Wry mouth. Other than recognized colors. White body splashes. Dudley nose.</p>	<p>Eliminating Faults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggressive or overly shy. Undershot. Overshot by more 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. White body splashes in all colours, which means white on body between withers and tail, on sides between elbows and back of hindquarters. <p>Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified</p>	
	<p>Other Disqualifications</p> <p>Monorchidism and cryptorchidism.</p>	<p>N.B.</p> <p>Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.</p>	<p>Note</p> <p>Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.</p>
<p>Faults</p> <p>Any display of shyness, fear or aggression.</p>	<p>Faults</p> <p>Any deviation from almond-shaped eyes. Exaggerated reach and drive. Gait faults shall be penalized according to the degree of deviation from the ideal.</p>	<p>Faults</p> <p>Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.</p>	<p>Faults</p> <p>Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.</p> <p>Poor pigmentation undesirable over one year of age.</p>
<p>Severe Faults</p> <p>Pink spots on the exceeding 25% after one year of age. Prick ears and hanging ears. Non-typical coats.</p>	<p>Severe Faults</p> <p>Viciousness towards people or animals. Prick ears; overly large ears; low-set ears with no lift from the base. Non-typical coats such as excessively long; overabundant/profuse; wiry; or curly.</p>	<p>Severe Faults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prick ears and hanging ears. Non-typical coats. 	