

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL



Extended Breed Standard of **THE AUSTRALIAN CATTLE DOG**

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In collaboration with
Australian National Kennel Council

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HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE BREED

The Australian Cattle Dog was developed to assist with establishing the cattle industry in early Australian conditions. The principal requirement was a strong, biting dog, possessing great stamina and capable of mustering and moving wild cattle. Early imported breeds of working dogs did not possess these requirements.

When the chips are down, and man urgently requires something that is not available, he of necessity applies himself to creating the unobtainable – necessity is said to be the mother of invention!

Our first settlers had a limited availability of labour, this created problems in the control of their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. Most properties were unfenced and the scrub country had not been cleared. To facilitate the efficient handling of sheep and cattle, they set about creating breeds of dogs to do this work for them.

A great deal of research has been undertaken to ascertain the origin of the Australian Cattle Dog, but as early breeders kept very little recorded information, there is a marked divergence of opinion as to the breeds used to develop the purebred dog we see today. It is generally recognised though, that it resulted from the crossing of blue merle, smooth haired Collies with the Dingo, with a later injection of Dalmatian and black and tan Kelpie blood. Other cross breeding was tried, such as a Bull Terrier cross, but all these other crosses proved to be unsuccessful for the working of cattle.

The purpose of the Australian Cattle Dog is to assist in the control and movement of cattle, in both open and confined areas. The requirements of this breed should be kept in mind when judging the breed.

The cattlemen were using a black bob-tailed dog with a white ring around its neck and extending down its front. It had long hair, big hanging ears, a cumbersome gate, and it could not stand the heat and barked too much. The barking upset and stampeded the cattle.

A drover named Timmins of New South Wales crossed this breed, known as the Smithfield, with the Dingo. This cross-mating is believed to have occurred about the year 1830 and the progeny were bob-tailed pups that were named Timmins Biters. Unlike the black bob-tail, these dogs were silent, though severe heelers. Timmins was regularly droving between Bathurst and the cattle market in Sydney. Other breeds of dogs and crosses were tried without success.

A landowner named Hall at Muswellbrook, in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, imported a pair of Smooth Haired blue merle Collies from Scotland in the year 1840. They proved excellent cattle dogs, however they barked and headed, both undesirable traits in a cattle dog.

Hall crossed progeny from this pair with the Dingo and the pups became known as Hall's Heelers. The Collies being blue merle and the dingo red, resulted in the puppies being either blue or red mottled. They were good heelers, did not bark when working, and the Collie blood made them controllable.

A Dingo trait is to silently creep up behind an animal and bite, and these cross pups followed this style of heeling. A butcher named Davis took a pair of these dogs to the cattle sale yards in Sydney in the 1870's. Cattlemen liked the dogs and as pups became available, purchased them.

Brothers Jack and Harry Bagust were impressed with these dogs and set about improving them. They introduced selected Dalmatian blood, giving the progeny a love of horses and a sense of responsibility for guarding their master's possessions. The owner could drop his coat, saddle or any of his possessions on the ground or tether his horse and bid his dog to stay with them. This new blood also changed the blue and red mottles to speckles. At this stage, the brothers were still not satisfied with the reasoning ability of their dog, so they introduced black and tan Kelpie blood thus advancing their working ability to intelligent controllable workers whilst still retaining the silent biting of the animals' heels.

The black and tan Kelpie left colour traces, such as the tan markings on the blue dogs, also the black on the head.

The breeders were then selective in breeding for their working ability type and colour and the dog became known as the Queensland Heeler. Later the name was changed to Australian Heeler and then to Australian Cattle Dog that has now been accepted throughout Australia as the official name of this breed.

In 1893, the late Robert Kaleski began breeding Queensland Heeler: and in 1897, he drew up a standard for the breed, which was published in the Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales in 1903. The New South Wales Kennel Club then adopted the Standard and the other states followed.

Keleski's Standard is produced below:

First Standard of the Cattle Dog (As prepared by Robert Kaleski – 1897)

Head: Broad between the ears, tapering to a point at muzzle, full under the eye, strong and muscular in the jaws.

Ears: Short and pricked, running to a point at tip: thick, and set wide apart on the skull, with plenty of muscle at the butts. Should be as decidedly pricked as a cat's.

Eyes: Brown, quick and sly-looking.

Shoulders: Strong with good slope for free action.

Chest: Deep, but not out of proportion to body.

Legs: Clean, and fair amount of bone, great muscular development

Feet: Small and cat shaped.

Back: Straight, with ribs well sprung, ribbed up, and good loins, should arch slightly at loins.

Hindquarters: Strong and muscular, with back thighs well let down for speed; no dew-claws on feet; tail fair length, Dingo or bottle shaped.

Height: about 20 inches, bitches a little smaller

Coat: Short, smooth and very dense.

Colour: Head, black or red; body, dark blue on black (sometimes with black saddle) and black spot on tail butt. Lighter blue, sometimes mottled with white hairs on under parts of body; legs bluish with red spots mottled over them. Tail light Blue, sometimes with white tip.

The following article written by Robert Kaleski and published in the RAS Annual of 1911 gives some insight to the development of the breed from 1875.

“As far as I can find out, they (Hall's Heelers) were first brought to Sydney by Mr Fred Davis, of the well known butchering family, about 1875. After him came the Lees, the Peakes and the Jubbs (the first named are suspected of putting a cross of white bull-terrier through them.) Then a blue dog came on the field, called Bentley's dog, who was crossed through these dogs, and from whom all the latter-day blue cattle dogs of any note claim their descent. He was owned by a butcher working on Glebe Island, called Tom Bentley, and was a marvel for work and appearance. Although his pedigree was never set out, we know beyond doubt that he was one of the pure Hall Strain. From him on selected bitches, Messrs Jack and Harry Bagust, C Petit, J Brennan, A Davis (Fred Davis's son who was my partner in the blue dog for years), many other breeders and myself made a start breeding the blue dogs. About fifteen years ago we had them practically perfect.

The third blood (bull terrier) filtered through, had set the breed thoroughly; though in some cases at the expense of shape and activity. Where more than a slight infusion of bull was used it was noticeable (and to this day) in the rabbit ear, heavy jaw and long low body lacking activity; also lack of sense and control and snapping instead of

sharp clean biting. However these were few and far between; the majority were beautifully marked blue and red speckled dogs, exactly like a small thick-set dingo, boiling over with work and as sensible as Christmas.

There are two colours – blue and red speckle. The markings of both are curious and found on no other dog in the world. The blue speckles have the head black or red, usually with a white stripe down the middle of the forehead; body dark blue speckled on the back, sometimes with black saddle, or black spot on the tail butt; lighter blue, sometimes mottled with white hairs on under parts of the body; legs bluish, with or without red spots, mottled over them. A tan spot over each eye (which is brown) and tail light blue, sometimes with white tip. This is the general run of blue speckles.

There are, however, three strains (Messrs. Harry Bagust, Yabley's and myself) which have more fancy markings. We breed for black head only, black spot on tail butt, or black saddle * (all other black barred) legs to be all red speckles (only) to forearm and hock. This adds much to the appearance of the dogs, and as we only breed from the best workers, does affect the working qualities. The colours are now so fixed that we practically never breed them out markings.

The red speckle has red ears, sometimes a red saddle, and the rest of the body red speckles on a light ground. They are therefore much easier to breed to colour than the blues. In some of the blues, a red pup will be found in every litter; in the reds a blue; usually they throw their own colours. For example, in my twenty years of breeding blues, I never bred a red speckle yet, and my experience is that of most breeders”.

BREED STANDARD EXTENSION

● GENERAL APPEARANCE

The general appearance is that of a strong compact, symmetrically built working dog, with the ability and willingness to carry out his allotted task however arduous. Its combination of substance, power, balance and hard muscular condition must convey the impression of great agility, strength and endurance. Any tendency to grossness or weediness is a serious fault.

The Cattle Dog should be seen as a whole dog. When this is done the correct body structure then becomes an integral part of the type, as does the correct head. Both are essential if a

Cattle Dog is to be of the standard required. While no dog is perfect, one that is excellent in head and very faulty in body is just as lacking in type as the one that is excellent in body, but very faulty in the head. The typical Cattle Dog should be average or better in both head and body, in addition to a characteristic temperament. The nearer to perfection he is in both head and body plus movement, the better the dog (See figure 1).

Figure 1



● CHARACTERISTICS

As the name implies the dog's prime function, and one in which he has no peer, is the control and movement of cattle in both wide-open and confined areas. Always alert, extremely intelligent, watchful, courageous and trustworthy, with an implicit devotion to duty making it an ideal dog.

● TEMPERAMENT

The Cattle Dog's loyalty and protective instincts make it a self-appointed guardian to the Stockman, his herd and his property. Whilst naturally suspicious of strangers, must be amenable to handling, particularly in the Show ring. Any feature of temperament or structure foreign to a working dog must be regarded as a serious fault.

Should give the picture of a bright, intelligent dog, loyal and ready to defend his master and property, but at all times amenable to discipline. The day has passed when this or any other breed should be excused for bad show ring behaviour. This dog is such a heavy biter that it is much too dangerous to encourage uncontrollable or temperamental specimens in the show ring.

● HEAD AND SKULL

The head is strong and must be in balance with other proportions of the dog and in keeping with its general conformation. The broad skull is slightly curved between the ears, flattening to a slight but definite stop. The cheeks muscular, neither coarse nor prominent with the underjaw strong, deep and well developed. The foreface is broad and well filled in under the eyes, tapering gradually to form a medium length, deep, powerful muzzle with the skull and muzzle on parallel planes. The lips are tight and clean. Nose black.

The head of the Cattle Dog as set out in the Standard meets the requirements of the dog to efficiently carry out the work that he was bred for. A broad skull gives the dog plenty of brain room and the structure for musculation of the head.

A slight but definite stop is called for because if a dog received a kick from a beast it would allow the hoof to glance off the head, minimising damage to the dog. A stop that is too pronounced, if caught by a flying hoof, would certainly mean serious, or fatal injury to the dog's skull. A strong, medium length, deep muzzle, together with a good underjaw, is needed to carry out the job of driving and turning cattle by biting their heels. The foreface is well filled out under the eye and there should be a gradual taper to the nose. Strength of foreface with clean lines enables the dog to give a strong, clean bite. Tight clean lips are required, as loose, drooping lips could be bitten by the dog's teeth when heeling cattle. This would shy a dog off biting, making him useless for working cattle. The nose is black, irrespective of the colour of the dog. The head is a combination of several exacting parts, and any one of these may contain enough faults to destroy the overall look. It is absolutely essential to have the correct head type. (See figure 2)



Figure 2

● EYES

The eyes should be of oval shape and medium size, neither prominent nor sunken and must express alertness and intelligence. A warning or suspicious glint is characteristic when approached by strangers. Eye colour, dark brown.

The eyes have four variables. The manner in which they affect appearance are: shape, set or placement in the skull, colour and size. The eyes are oval in shape, of medium size, and dark brown, with a warning or suspicious glint. The eyes are set well apart, giving the dog good wide vision. Prominent eyes, as often found in dogs that are too short in the muzzle, would be a hindrance to the dog in its work as it could be blinded, or have its eye badly injured, if a steer lashed back, or if a twig caught its eye whilst working among low bushes. A sunken eye is one that would catch the dirt on a cattle drive or when working in dusty cattle yards. (See figure 3).

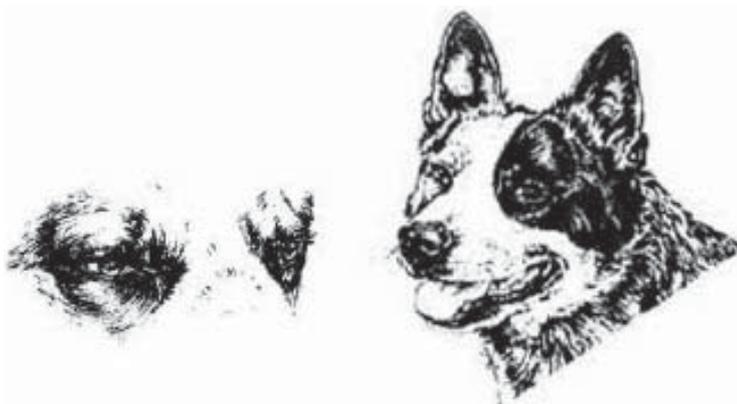


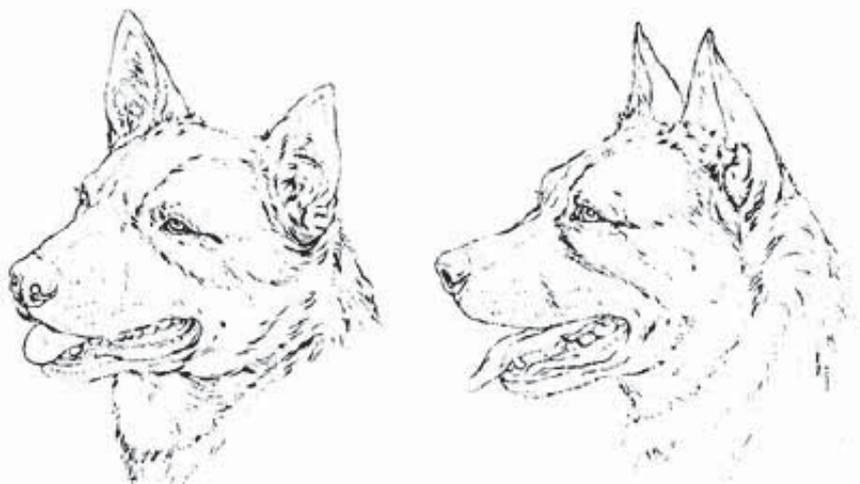
Figure 3

● EARS

The ears should be of moderate size, preferably small rather than large, broad at the base, muscular, pricked and moderately pointed neither spoon nor bat eared. The ears are set wide apart on the skull, inclining outwards, sensitive in their use and pricked when alert, the leather should be thick in texture and the inside of the ear well furnished with hair.

The ears should be of moderate size. The Standard says preferably small, rather than large, which means that if the ears are anything other than moderate in size, it is better that they are smaller, as large ears are not characteristic of this breed. Ears should be pricked and set wide apart on the skull, inclined outwards and sensitive in their use, so that words or whistles of command can be easily heard. The inside of the ear should be fairly well furnished with hair, as this helps to prevent foreign particles entering the ear cavity, where it could cause damage to the dog's hearing. (See figure 4).

Figure 4

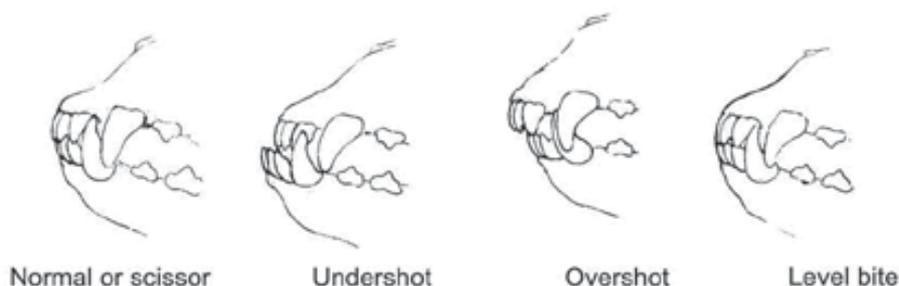


● MOUTH

The teeth, sound, strong and evenly spaced, gripping with a scissor-bite, the lower incisors close behind and just touching the upper. As the dog is required to move difficult cattle by heeling or biting, teeth that are sound and strong are very important.

This is the usual mouth found in most breeds, but the accent is still on strength. As the demand is for a powerful biter, faulty teeth must be penalised, such as overshot or undershot bites. (See figure 5).

Figure 5

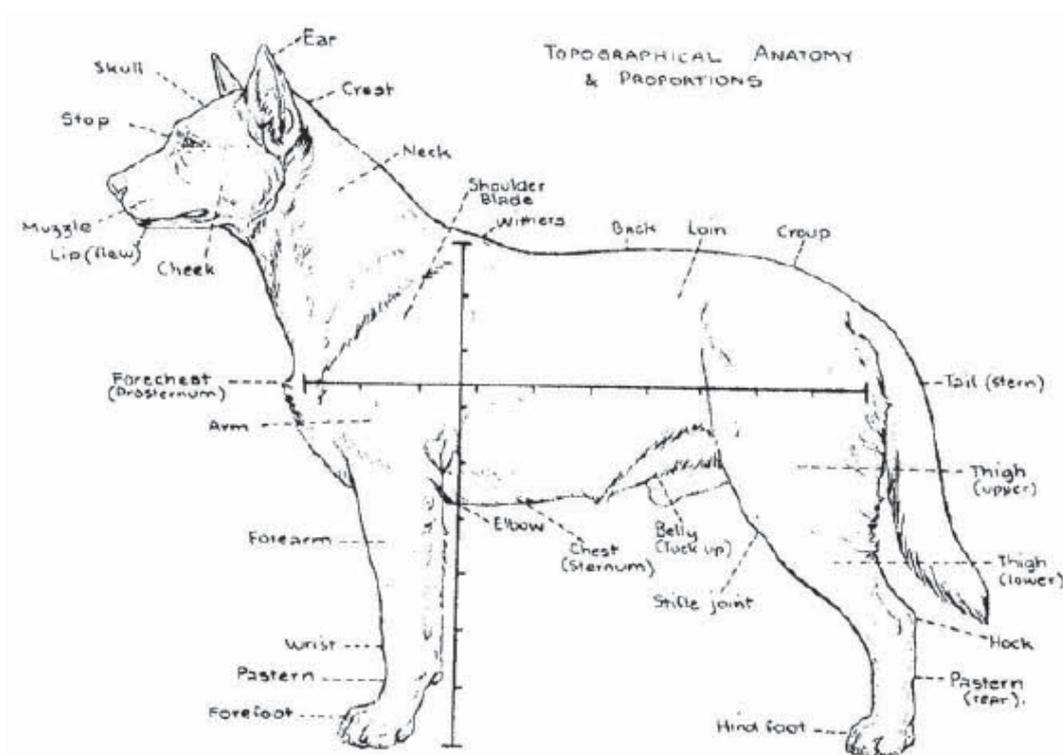


● NECK

The neck is extremely strong, muscular, and of medium length broadening to blend into the body and free from throatiness.

This is the only neck a working Cattle Dog should have as it is needed to balance the rest of the dog, providing its frame is powerful and muscular, because the general appearance is of a compact, sturdy looking, hard worker. A dog that is free from throatiness has greater protection from a kick back by cattle. Short necks restrict a dog's length of reach when going in to bite the heels of cattle and should be penalised. (See figure 6).

Figure 6



● FOREQUARTERS

The shoulders are strong, sloping, muscular and well angulated to the upper arm and should not be too closely set at the point of the withers. The forelegs have strong, round bone, extending to the feet and should be straight and parallel when viewed from the front, but the pasterns should show flexibility with a slight angle to the forearm when viewed from the side. Although the shoulders are muscular and the bone is strong, loaded shoulders and heavy fronts will hamper correct movement and limit working ability.

The requirements for a hard working dog that needs to cover long distances and work many hours are that the upper arm should join the shoulder blade as near to a 90 degree right angle as possible. The forelegs, viewed from all angles, should be muscular, clean and strongly boned. Viewed from the front, they should be straight, but from the side should show a slight angle of pastern. This angle of pastern is necessary to

absorb shock from the forequarters. Too much angle results in loose, weak wrists, whilst too straight pasterns cause jarring, which puts a strain on the entire front assembly. Under hard work these types of fronts will become sore and break down. (See figure 9 also figure 6).

Figure 9

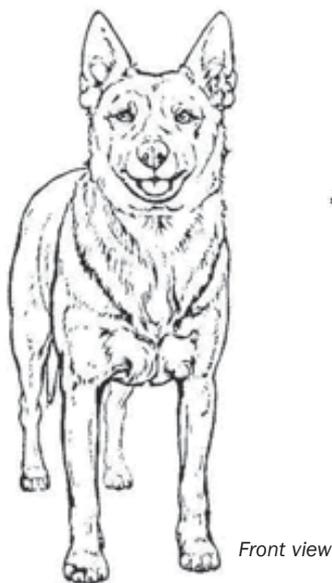
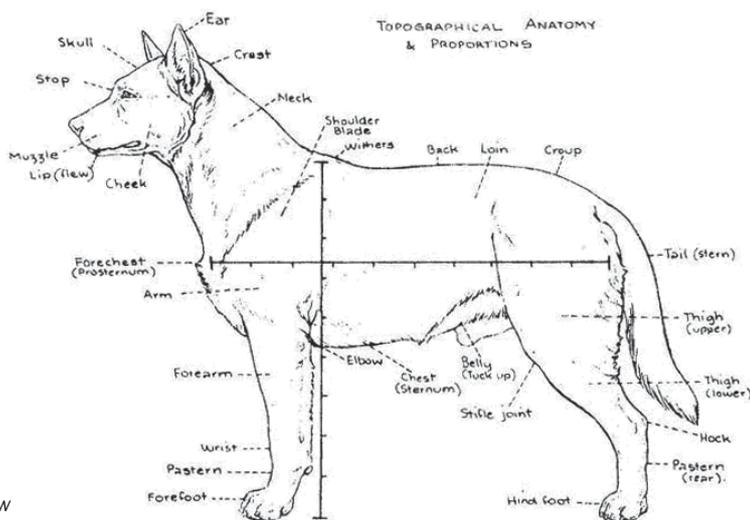


Figure 6



● BODY

The length of the body from the point of the breastbone, in a straight line to the buttocks, is greater than the height at the withers, as 10 is to 9. The topline is level, back strong with ribs well sprung and carried well back not barrel ribbed. The chest is deep, muscular and moderately broad with the loins broad, strong and muscular and the flanks deep. The dog is strongly coupled.

The Standard states that the approximate length to height ratio is as 10 is to 9. Bear in mind that this is a dog that is required to turn quickly away from danger, a dog that is too long in loin lacks the ability to turn quickly. The topline should be level with a straight back. The Standard is not asking for a table top, but is indeed asking for a level back which fits in with the musculature of the dog, and gives the impression that the dog is one, not two parts. The ribs are well sprung and ribbed back, again the requirements of a good working dog. The chest should be deep, powerful and moderately broad, reaching down to the dog's elbows. This allows plenty of room for a large strong heart, and allows the lungs to expand to their maximum for endurance. The chest should not be too deep though, as this would prevent the dog from flattening under a kick from a bullock. Deep, broad and muscular loins, with deep flanks, are required to couple together the strong forequarters and powerful hindquarters. (See figure 6)

● HINDQUARTERS

The hindquarters are broad, strong and muscular. The croup is rather long and sloping, thighs long, broad and well developed, the stifles well turned and the hocks strong and well let down. When viewed from behind, the hind legs, from the hocks to the feet, are straight and placed parallel, neither close nor too wide apart.

The Standard again calls for strength and illustrates the need for powerful, muscular hindquarters to match the strong front and good, broad head mentioned earlier. The hindquarters are the driving force of the dog and obviously weak, narrow or tapering hindquarters would not provide the strength required for the dog to work the long hours necessary when driving cattle. A well turned stifle is called for, it does not mean that it should be as much as is found in German Shepherds, nor should it be too straight, as this would not allow the hindquarters to deliver the thrust needed for proper mobility. The hocks should be straight, when viewed from behind, and set neither too close, nor too wide apart; they should be strong and well let down. This gives the dog correct balance and the ability to turn quickly and brake suddenly when required. Cow hocks or bow hocks are serious faults. (See figure 8 also figure 6).

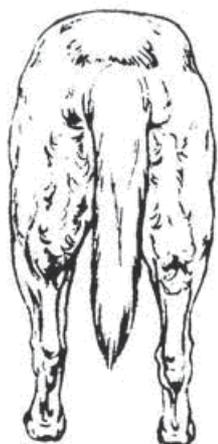


Figure 8

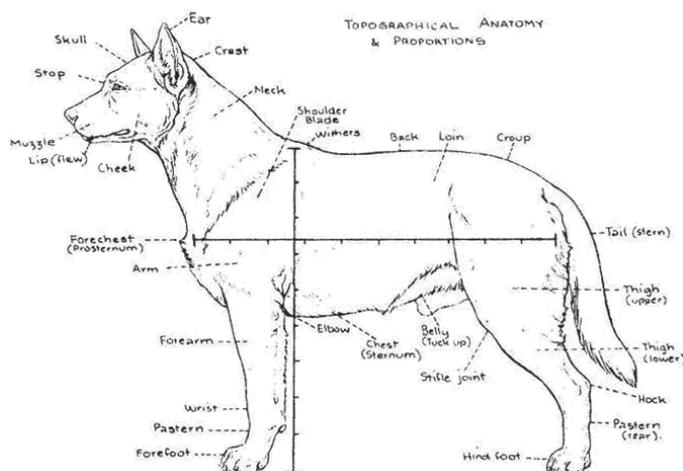


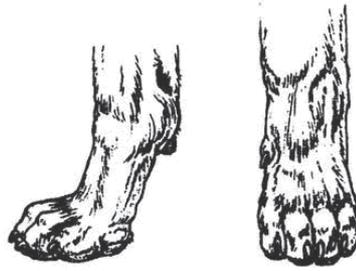
Figure 6

● FEET

The feet should be round and the toes short, strong, well arched and held close together. The pads are hard and deep, and the nails must be short and strong.

A neat, round foot is strong and functionally correct. Pads should be thick to absorb shock and protect the foot. A dog with correct feet and adequate exercise on a hard surface, will wear its nails down naturally. Splayed or otherwise weak feet will break down under hard use. Such feet allow gravel and burrs to lodge between the toes. If a working dog has not good feet, even if he meets all the other requirements of the Standard, he has not the mobility to do his work. Good feet are a must. A dog with thin pads would soon wear them out on rough ground. (See figure 7).

Figure 7



● TAIL

The set of tail is moderately low, following the contours of the sloping croup and of length to reach approximately to the hock. At rest it should hang in a very slight curve. During movement or excitement the tail may be raised, but under no circumstances should any part of the tail be carried past a vertical line drawn through the root. The tail should carry a good brush.

The tail acts as a rudder or counter-balance for the dog in movement. Although the tail may be raised in movement, or when the dog is excited, it should never be carried over the back, or past an imaginary vertical line drawn through the root of the tail. The set of tail should be low and following the contour of the sloping rump, because a dog with too high a set of tail usually flags its tail over its back. The tail should look like part of the dog, not something that has been stuck on. The length of the tail should reach approximately to the hock, with a good brush and slight curve. A tail that is too long or lacks brush tends to hook or curl which is incorrect. (Figure 8 also see figure 6).

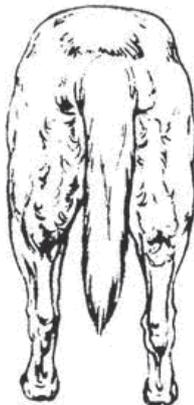


Figure 8

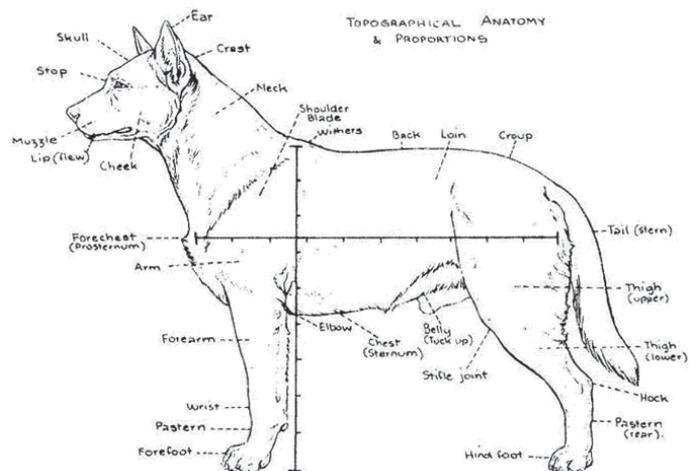


Figure 6

● GAIT/MOVEMENT

The action is true, free, supple and tireless and the movement of the shoulders and forelegs is in unison with the powerful thrust of the hindquarters. The capability of quick and sudden movement is essential. Soundness is of paramount importance and stiltiness, loaded or slack shoulders, straight shoulder placement, weakness at elbows, pasterns or feet, straight stifles, cow or bow hocks, must be regarded as serious faults. When trotting the feet tend to come closer together at ground level as speed increases, but when the dog comes to rest he should stand four square.

The Standard gives a fairly comprehensive description and obviously only a really well made Cattle Dog will correctly move in the manner described. Gait in itself is not soundness, but a measure of soundness. Proper gait is not possible without proper structure. If the structure is not correct, faults will be revealed that may be hidden when the dog is posed. Keeping in mind that a Cattle Dog is required to work long hours, it should gait freely with a minimum of up and down movement, covering the maximum amount of ground with a minimum of effort.

● COAT

The coat is smooth, a double coat with a short dense undercoat. The outer-coat is close, each hair straight, hard and lying flat, so that it is rain-resisting. Under the body, to behind the legs, the coat is longer and forms near the thigh a mild form of breeching. On the head (including the inside of the ears), to the front of the legs and feet, the hair is short. Along the neck it is longer and thicker. A coat either too long or too short is a fault. As an average, the hairs on the body should be from 2.5 to 4cm (approximately 1-1.5ins.) in length.

Cattle Dogs are required to work in the open in all weather conditions. They require all possible protection against the elements – wind, water and heat, as well as the cold nights of the slopes and plains of this country. It is a double coat, the outer helping to ward off the elements, and the undercoat also helps to keep the dog warm in winter and cool in summer. The coarse outer coat, and the thick undercoat, also helps to protect the skin from scratches and cuts by scrub where they work. The hair is straight. Curly or wavy coats are uncharacteristic of this breed and should not be encouraged.

● COLOUR

Blue – The colour should be blue, blue-mottled or blue speckled with or without other markings. The permissible markings are black, blue or tan markings on the head, evenly distributed for preference. The forelegs tan midway up the legs and extending up the front to breast and throat, with tan on jaws; the hindquarters tan on inside of hindlegs, and inside of thighs, showing down the front of the stifles and broadening out to the outside of the hindlegs from hock to toes. Tan undercoat is permissible on the body providing it does not show through the blue outer coat. Black markings on the body are not desirable.

Red Speckle – The colour should be of good even red speckle all over, including the undercoat, (neither white nor cream), with or without darker red markings on the head. Even head markings are desirable. Red markings on the body are permissible but not desirable.

The Standard specifies quite clearly the colour requirement for the breed. The base colour in blue dogs is black. The base colour in red speckle dogs is red.

Although white is not mentioned in the Standard, the 'blue' colour is produced by a more or less even intermingling of black and white hairs in the outer coat, giving the impression of bluish colour. The more white hairs present, the lighter the blue; the fewer white hairs present, the darker the blue. If the white hairs are so abundant that

the animal appears white, or the white hairs are so few that the animal appears black, the colour is considered undesirable.

Blue or red speckle is produced by small irregular groups of white hair distributed more or less evenly through the outer coat. Red speckle is the only colour provided for in the Standard for red dogs. Absence of speckle is undesirable as are black hairs showing through the coats of red dogs. The undercoat in red speckle dogs must be red, not white or cream.

Blue mottle is produced by irregular areas of white hair slightly larger than speckle, distributed more or less evenly through the outer coat.

The allowable positions of tan markings in blue dogs are clearly stated in the Standard. Tan may vary in shade from a pale to a very deep rich colour. The richer the tan the better. As stated in the Standard, tan undercoat is permissible on the body providing it does not show through the blue outer coat.

Most Australian Cattle Dogs have a white star or stripe on the forehead and these are quite acceptable but, on the other hand, their absence should not be penalised.

The amount of white in the tail should be in balance with the body colouring. A completely white tail is incorrect. Although body patches are undesirable, an otherwise excellent specimen should not be penalised in favour of a dog without body patches that is inferior in general conformation. Correct colour is of secondary importance to type, balance and soundness of conformation. Judges should always keep in mind the purpose for which the dog was bred. However, there is some concern among breeders that body patches should not become too large or prevalent in the breed.

Australian Cattle Dog pups are born white with only black or red head markings and body patches (if any) showing. The true colouring starts to show at about two to three weeks of age and continues to develop up to six to eight weeks of age. Coat colour may continue to change until maturity. As a general rule, colour tends to darken with age until the age of about 7 years.

A suggested reason for the Standard stating that red dogs should be speckled is that unspeckled colouring can appear similar to Dingo colouring. As the Dingo has long been despised by graziers, and is still a declared noxious animal in most States, a colour differentiation was, and is, essential to protect working, red Australian Cattle Dogs from being mistakenly shot on sight, although there are some who disagree with this theory. (Comment amended May 1998).

● **SIZE**

Height: **Dogs 46-51 cms (approx. 18 – 20 inches) at withers**
 Bitches 43-48 cms (approx. 17 – 19 inches) at withers

The Standard lays out clearly the desirable height at the withers for dogs and bitches. As there is a good range of 51mm (2 ins) allowable for dogs and bitches, specimens over or under desirable heights should be seriously penalised.

- **FAULTS**

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 on the health and welfare of the dog.

- **NOTE**

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

Judging the Australian Cattle Dog

As with all other working dogs, there are certain basic features about the Cattle Dog that judges must keep in mind at all times. In particular, they must be very clear in distinguishing the Cattle Dog from the Kelpie.

This is a sturdy tough working dog with strength and endurance possibly greater than any other dog of similar size. Although its height, length and proportion are similar to the Kelpie, it has much heavier bone and, over all, far greater substance.

In looking for the correct type with strength and substance, the judge must be careful not to be misled by dogs which have been fattened up to give the impression of substance. The Standard calls for “Hard muscular condition” and a dog capable of quick and sudden movement.. Fat dogs with clumsy, sluggish movement must be penalised.

Although this dog is renowned for his strength and aggression (at the right time), judges should not tolerate unreliable behaviour in the show-ring. If the dog has the intelligence and temperament required, he should respond to the control of his handler and be tractable at all times whilst the judge is examining him.

The head is a feature of the breed and must clearly reflect the dog’s intelligence and his ability to move cattle with the power of his jaws. It is this ability to bite, which enables him to shift a stubborn beast, and great strength of jaw is required.

The expression can only be described as hard and strong with a look that tells strangers clearly to be beware. It is probably in expression rather than any other feature that his Dingo ancestry is demonstrated.

A judge wishing to perfect his knowledge of the breed should make a detailed comparison of the ears with other dogs in the Working Group, particularly German Shepherds, Corgis and Kelpies. There are many points of similarity, but it is the vital differences which a judge must know. Soft ears have been a problem at times and are generally associated with oversize. Remember the Standard specifies moderate size but rather small than large.

The chest is moderately broad and, with ribs well sprung, gives the Cattle Dog a much more rounded chest and body than we find in the Kelpie. With his strong hindquarters and loins and ribs carried well back, he should present a picture of compact, muscular strength.

Although a slight spring of pastern is required, we find generally the bone running down into the feet, which are compact, strong.

Colour is important and spelled out in great detail in the Standard. There is a trite old saying that “a good dog cannot be a bad colour” but this becomes insupportable in our age of carefully laid down Standards that clearly make certain colours acceptable. Note that the colours are blue, blue speckled or blue-mottled and red speckle. Black dogs are not permissible and black marks on the body are undesirable.

Finally, where you are in doubt as to a decision between two dogs, move them around the ring once more and decide which is better fitted for the task of droving cattle. This is why the dog developed to work cattle under Australian conditions and the dog best equipped to do this should be your winner.

PUPPIES

Puppies are born white but very soon develop their blue mottle or red speckle and usually the colour of their pads indicates their future colouring. They have drop ears as babies; these become erect at any age up to 6 or 7 months.

They inherit the instinct to bite and work, so care must be taken not to expose the puppy to danger and it should not be allowed near cattle or horses until it can look after itself. The puppies when penned together spend much of their day biting each other's legs.

Most are easy to train and the first lesson should always be to obey commands. When heeling cattle, they bite low on the back leg, selecting the hoof on the ground and immediately crouch to allow the resulting kick to pass over their heads. If they were to bite the leg which is off the ground, they would almost certainly receive a dangerous kick on the head which could prove fatal.

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Books of Reference:

Dogs of Australia; by Kennel Control council Melbourne Victoria.

Australian Cattle Dog Society of NSW – notes from Breed Seminar.