



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL LTD

Extended Breed Standard of **THE AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD**

Produced by
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from the American Kennel Club's
'Illustrated Guide'
in conjunction with
The Australian National Kennel Council Ltd

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Stephen J Hubbell

HISTORY OF THE BREED

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 1800s.

The Australian Shepherd's popularity rose steadily with the boom of western horseback riding after World War 11 which became known to the general public via rodeos, horse show, 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 versatile, 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.

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 with soundness essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be mindful of features which could be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed.

! GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Australian Shepherd is well balanced, slightly longer than tall of medium size and bone, with colouring 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.

A well proportioned medium sized dog that will give the impression of enduring long periods of active duty as a working stock dog as a result of strength and stamina.

! CHARACTERISTICS

The Australian Shepherd is an intelligent working dog of strong herding and guarding instincts. He is loyal companion and has the stamina to work all day.

The variety and individuality in colour are unique to the breed.

! 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. Any display of shyness, fear or aggression is a fault and is to be severely penalised.

The intelligence of the breed should be evident in its keen, eager expression.

! HEAD AND SKULL

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

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.

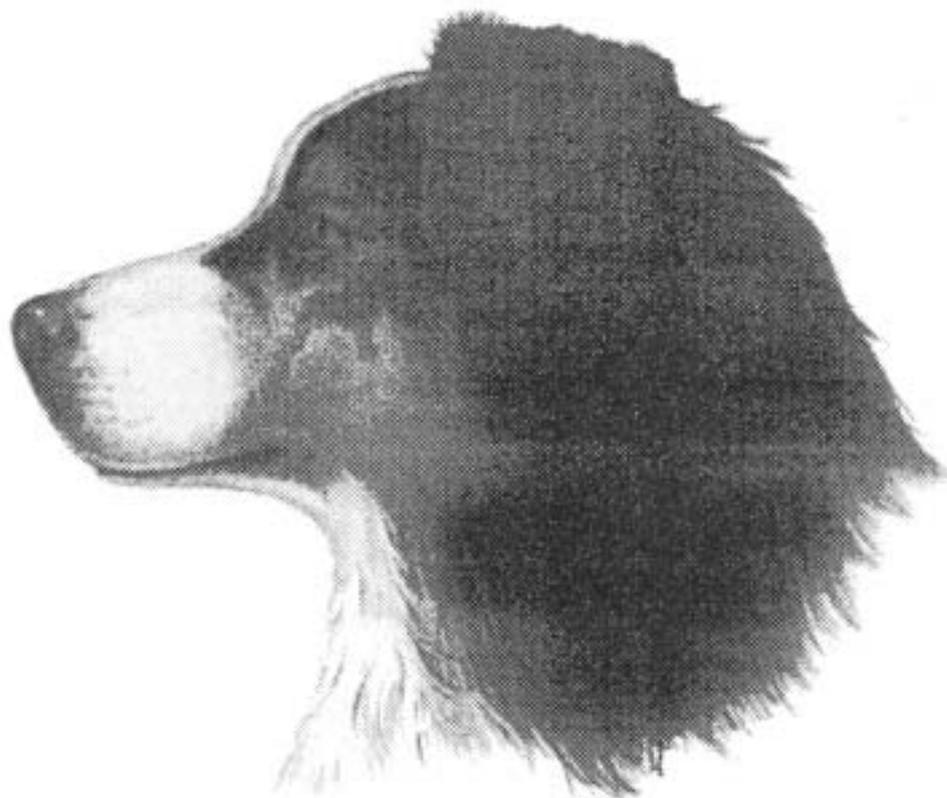
Clean-cut may be defined as the head is clearly outlined, well formed, trim and neat, free from extra or loose skin, pendulous flews and/or visible haws.

The length and width of the skull should be equal, with the muzzle being either equal or slightly shorter in length than the skull. These dimensions emphasise balance, symmetry and moderation. The planes should be parallel with a moderate but well defined stop.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



! 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.

Expression: Showing attentiveness and intelligence, alert and eager. Gaze should be keen but friendly.

The eye should be almond-shaped with a tight fitting rim to protect from debris. The eye colour may be in any combination of brown, blue, amber or any variation, including flecks and marbling.

! EARS

Are 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.

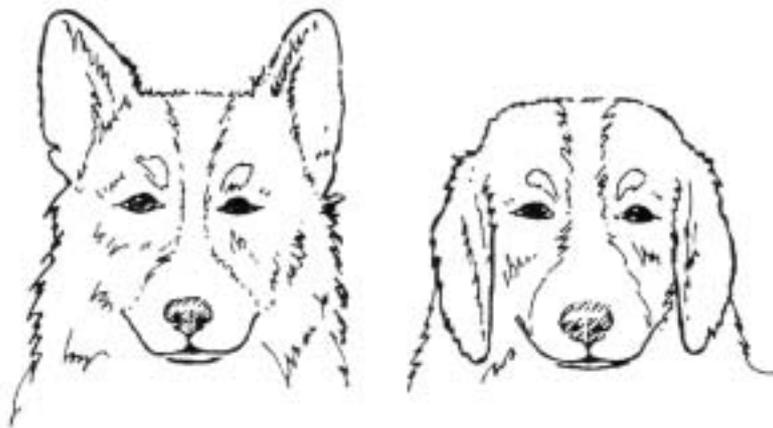
Prick ears and hanging ears are severe faults.

The eyes and ears work together as a sensory team. Ears that break forward and over, or to the side as a rose ear allow protection from outside elements without harbouring moisture or impairing hearing.



Correct

Fig. 3



Incorrect



Scissor



Undershot

Fig. 4



Level or Pincer



Overshot

! MOUTH

A full complement of strong white teeth should meet in a scissor bite or may meet in a level bite.

Disqualification: Undershot. Overshot greater than .3 cm (1/8 in).

Loss of contact caused by short centre incisors in an otherwise correct bite shall not be judged undershot.

Teeth broken or missing by accident shall not be penalised.

The scissors bite is indicative of a correct jaw assembly. The Australian Shepherd must be able to move in and "grip" livestock. An overshot or undershot jaw does not allow for the correct pinching grip and leaves the animal susceptible to injury when working. An even bite is acceptable. Broken or missing teeth as a result of an accident are not to be penalised.

! NECK

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

A neck of moderate length and slightly arched is most efficient for endurance and contributes to the sense of balance, symmetry and moderation. A short neck will not allow maximum flexibility for the body while gripping livestock.

! 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. Pasterns are medium length and very slightly sloped. Front dew claws may be removed.

The forequarters support one-half of the entire body weight, acting as a shock absorber during movement. The well laid back shoulders are essential.

The width of a hand should slide easily between the front legs, along the chest.

The pasterns must have some slope for absorbing shock in motion.

Fig. 5

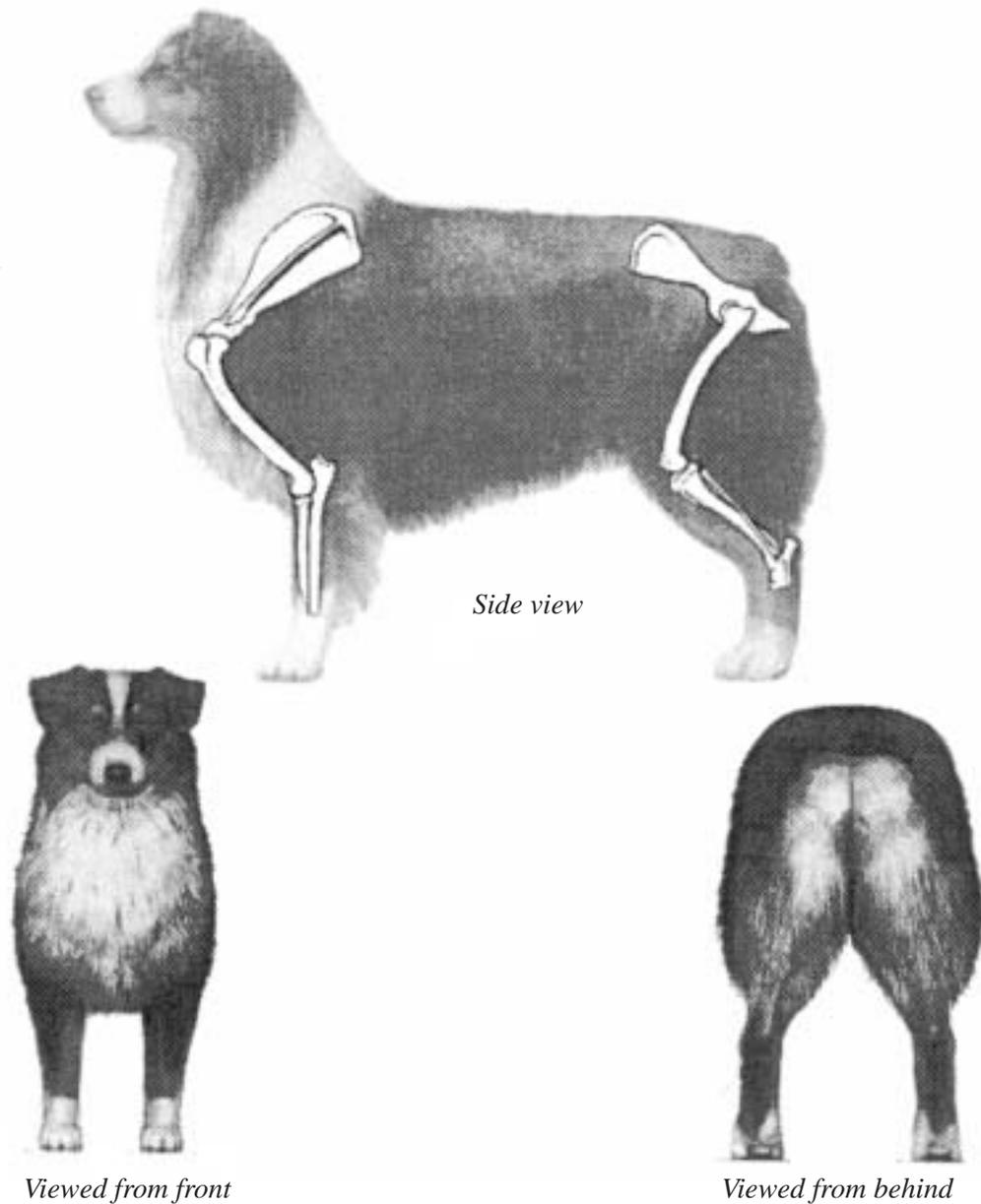
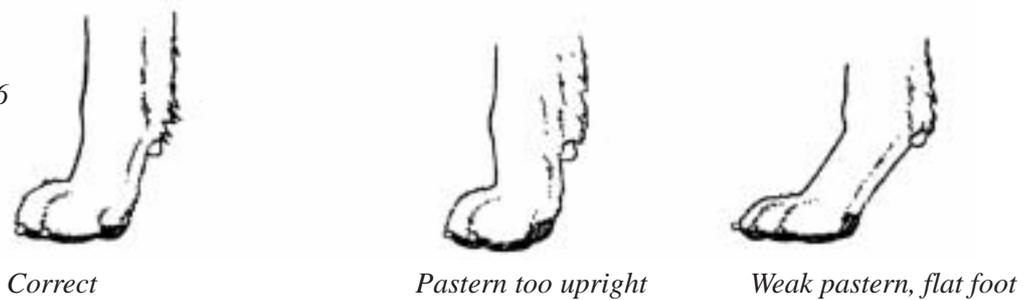


Fig. 6



! BODY

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 tuck-up.

A firm, muscular body is important to the athlete and is reflected in the conditioning. This contributes to overall fitness and agility and is a prerequisite for a working dog..

A firm topline should appear level and strong. The moderately sloping croup is most effective in allowing the dog to cover endless miles with the greatest amount of ease. A well sprung ribcage is imperative for lung and heart room.

! 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 (rear pasterns) are short, perpendicular to the ground and parallel to each other when viewed from the rear. Rear dew claws must be removed.

The hindquarters must correspond to the forequarters to allow efficient functionality. The hindquarters are not designed to support weight like the forequarters, they are intended to create power, force and drive.

The hind legs fall from the point of the hip, through the centre of the leg, to the ground. Hock joints are set low (giving short rear pasterns) for more endurance with a slower start. Longer rear pasterns are for faster starts but result in less endurance.

! FEET

Front and hind are oval, compact with close knit, well arched toes. Pads are thick and resilient.

Weak, flat or broken down feet weaken the whole fore and hindquarter assemblies.

! TAIL

Straight, docked, or naturally bobbed, not to exceed four inches in length.

The tail is straight, docked or naturally bobbed, not to exceed four inches in length.

! GAIT/MOVEMENT

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 towards 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.

A correctly built Australian Shepherd will maintain balance and symmetry when in motion. They must be able to cover ground in a minimum number of steps without sacrificing the agility necessary for sudden changes of direction.

! 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 hockjoints. Backs of forelegs and breeches are moderately feathered. There is a moderate mane and frill, more pronounced in dogs than in bitches. Non-typical coats are severe faults.

The correct medium sized coat of the Australian Shepherd must be viewed in its utilitarian aspect, to provide protection from the elements and other environmental conditions that the dog will experience under working conditions.

! COLOUR

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 colour 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 all colours.

No one colour is accepted or preferred over another. The variety in colour combinations and patterns provide individuality within the breed. White trim may vary from small amounts on the tips of the toes to full blazes, collars and stockings.

! SIZE

The preferred height for males is 51-58.5 cms (20-23 ins) and females 45.5-53.5 cms (18-21 ins)

Quality is not to be sacrificed in favour of size.

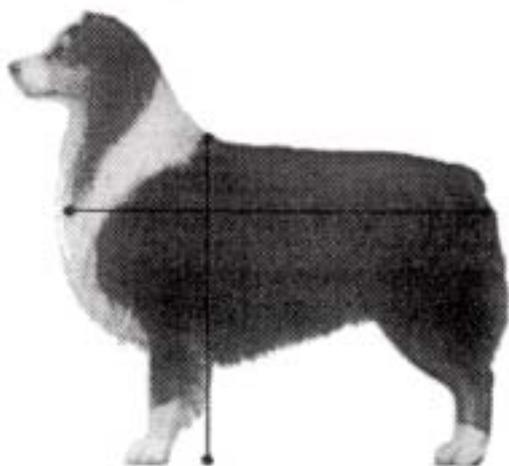
Proportion: Measuring from the breastbone to rear of thigh and from top of the withers to the ground the Australian Shepherd is slightly longer than tall.

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

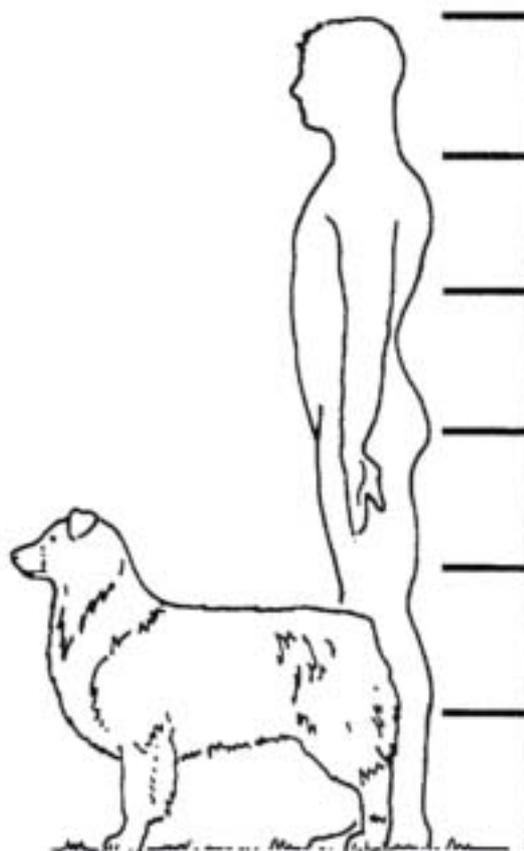
The Australian Shepherd is well balanced, slightly longer than tall, creating an overall picture of symmetry, blending naturally from one point to another.

Solidly built with moderate bone the male should reflect masculinity without coarseness or cloddiness and the bitches should appear feminine without being fine of bone.

Fig. 7



Proportions



Relative Heights

! FAULTS

Serious:

- Any display of shyness, fear or aggression to be severely penalised.*
- Pink spots on nose in dogs over one year of age which exceed 25% of nose.*
- Prick ears, hanging ears.*
- Non-typical coats.*

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.

Disqualification:

- Undershot. Overshot greater than 0.3 cm (1/8 in)*
- White body splashes, which means white on body between withers and tail on sides, between elbows and back of hindquarters on all colours.*

! NOTE

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

REFERENCES

"An Illustrated Guide" produced by the American Kennel Club with the cooperation of the United States Australian Shepherd Association Inc. and rearranged into ANKC format.

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The drawings throughout are by Stephen J Hubbell.