



Australian Shepherds

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The Australian Shepherd Dog

About the Australian Shepherd Dog

Eager and Energetic, the Australian Shepherd will keep you on your toes. His versatility and determination make him an excellent working dog. Origin is debated but most agree that the breed we now recognize was developed in the United States. The nickname "Aussie" was given because of his relationship with the Basque. American Shepherds became popular after World War II and was first registered in the 50's and later by the AKC in 1993 as a Herding Group.

General Characteristics

Standing 18-23 inches in height and weighing between 40-65 lbs., the Australian Shepherd is a solid, medium sized with a body that is slightly longer than it is high. Its coat is double layered, with a straight to wavy, medium course topcoat that is moderate in length and is weather resistant. Hidden underneath is a soft, dense coat that is full or thin based on climate. Four basic colors are acceptable and include red, blue, red merle, and blue merle. The face, chest, and legs may contain white and tan marks.

Lean and muscular, an Australian Shepherd exhibits power and domination. He has a thick, solid neck that is stable and strong. His ears are v-shaped and break forward and curve over or to the side. Eyes come in many colors and can be solid or combination. Some have shades of blue or ambers, while others have various shades of brown or hazel.

They work, think, and play hard and are alert, intelligent, and courageous. In addition to herd dogs they can make a nice family pet if trained early. Although they can be raised with children and behave properly, they are known for instinctual biting habits. It is recommended to wait until a child is at a responsible age to bring into the home. These dogs require an enormous amount of energy and do not deal well with confinement. They have an average life expectancy of up to 14 years.

Selecting a Method: Adoption or Breeder

There are several ways of obtaining your perfect canine friend. Adoption is one of them. One of the benefits of adopting is the amount of money you will save. Purchasing a pet from a reputable breeder is often expensive and frequently requires a waiting period. Another benefit is that you will be preserving the welfare of a wonderful creature. The downfall of adopting is you may not find exactly what you're looking for. There are often limited choices when searching for an Australian Shepherd to adopt. Normally they are full-grown and often do not come with background information. Coincidentally, you may not be fully satisfied.

Purchasing an Australian Shepherd from a breeder is another option. You will likely pay more than if you were to adopt, but you will have access to background information such as health history, bloodline, and characteristics. A health guarantee and registration papers are usually included with purchase.



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price. When you pick up your pet, you will have the opportunity to see the type of environment he or she was raised in. The downfall is that many breeders are selective of who they choose, and you may have to go through a screening process and waiting period.

Regardless of which method you choose, there are several resources to aid in your search. If adopting, try your local humane society or animal rescue shelter. If you decide to go with a breeder, try to find a reputable one by visiting dog shows and talking to exhibitors and judges. You can find both adoption agencies and breeders by searching the Internet, looking at bulletin boards, in newspapers, or by talking to veterinarians or other dog lovers.

Selecting Your Australian Shepherd

Before seeking out your new pet, there are some factors you should consider and questions you want to answer. The first question to ask yourself is whether you want a specific breed. Does sex, age, color, show quality, or health condition matter? What kind of lifestyle do you have? Are you active? What is your schedule? What type of personality do you have? Are there certain characteristics that you would like your pet to have? How do you plan to use the dog? Based on that information, you will be able to determine if adoption or a breeder is right for you.

When choosing your Australian Shepherd, pay close attention to the appearance of the animal. Does it seem to be in good physical and mental condition? Is the canine clean and well groomed? What type of environment is the animal living in? Has the dog had all of the required vaccinations, screening, and worming sessions that are recommended and does the owner have supporting documentation? Has the canine seen a veterinarian and if so who? Is there a return policy or a guarantee health contract? Look at the parents of the canine and note their condition. Quiz the breeder on knowledge of the breed and ask how long they have been breeding or how long they have owned the dog? It also helps to take a list of questions with you.

Your Australian Shepherd: From Birth to Senior

Raising a well-behaved and healthy Australian Shepherd requires love, attention, and early, strict obedience training. These early years are crucial times and demand a clean, stable, and welcoming environment. Puppies require a lot of attention from birth up to the first year. During the first three weeks of life they are totally cared for by the mother. She will provide them with nourishment and will keep them clean and tidy. The atmosphere should be warm and cozy and the puppy's nails should be kept short to prevent injury and discomfort. It is the pet owners responsibility to make sure that they are adequately cared for by the Dam. Puppies should visit the veterinarian within 5 days of birth.

Within the first 4 weeks, the eyes will open, teeth will erupt, and hearing and smell develop. Puppies will start gaining independence between their 5th and 6th week. During this time, you should start weaning them from breast milk and establish a regular potty schedule.

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Gradually separate mother from pup during the day and replace the liquid diet with an approved commercial dog food made specifically for puppies. The average pup needs to be feed between 3-5 times per day. A puppy is ready to be introduced to a new home between his 8th and 12th week of life.

The first year requires frequent trips to the veterinarian. During the first 16 weeks they will need a series of vaccinations. Be sure that your pet is parasite free, has been checked for worms, and that his body temperature is within normal levels. Check with your veterinarian for a complete and accurate schedule that fits the requirements of your state and your dog.

Around 6 months your dog will begin puberty. He may behave differently and forget concepts that he has already learned. This can last up to 6 weeks. During this time, be patient and reinforce what you have already taught him. For the first few years, your canine will go through many different stages and will develop his unique personality. He will go through periods of chewing, biting, challenging and dominant behavior, and sexual behavior if not spayed or neutered.

You may notice physical, mental, and emotional changes in your pet as it ages. These changes may be attributed to medical reasons, age, and stresses from health and environment.

- Behavioral – your pet may become more temperamental with age and less tolerant of children. They may exhibit anxiety or a sudden fear of something.
- Elimination Pattern – urination frequently increases and incontinence may occur
- Sleeping Pattern – may become restless or lethargic.
- Skin, Hair, and Nails– skin may become thin, dry, take longer to heal, and less resilient. The hair may thin, turn gray or white, and become dull. Nails may become thin and brittle and crack or chip.
- Decreased Organ Function – the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys start to dysfunction.
- Endocrine Changes – glandular functions increase and decrease hormone levels.
- Muscular System Changes – muscle mass deteriorates over time.
- Dental Problems – become more prone to oral diseases and tooth decay.
- Impaired or Loss of Vision and Hearing
- Metabolism Slows
- Weakened Immune System
- Decreased Activity Level
- Dehydration

Australian Shepherds are prone to certain health conditions such as Hip and Elbow Dysplasia, Epilepsy, Heart Disease, and especially eye defects such as Progressive Retinal Atrophy, cataracts, Ocular and Iris Coloboma, and detached retina. Be conscious to illness related symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, incontinence, runny nose and eyes, altered sleep patterns, loss or increase of appetite, rapid weight loss or gain, sores, unusual stool, blood in urine, cloudy eyes, skin discoloration, wounds that won't heal, loss of balance, persistent scratching, unusual discharge, coughing or sneezing, and behavioral changes. It is vital that you seek immediate medical attention if your dog experiences any of these symptoms. Do not attempt to self-treat.



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- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
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| • <u>Dry Food</u> | • <u>Toothbrush</u> |
| • <u>Collar</u> | • <u>Nail Trimmer</u> |

EXPERT TIP

Selecting a Crate

A dog should be able to stand and turn around inside a closed crate. If you have a Australian Shepherd Dog puppy, consider the average height and weight of an adult Terrier and choose a crate based on those specifications. .

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It is important to always be observant and attentive to the changing needs of your pet. In order to optimize your dog's health, keep it active and provide it with a well balanced diet consisting of an approved commercial dog food that is high in proteins, healthy treats, and supplements for deficiencies. Take your canine in for routine checkups and maintain good grooming habits. Keep the environment safe and clean and provide your dog with stimulating toys, teething bones, exercise, and activities

Caring For an Australian Shepherd

The coat of an Australian Shepherd consists of two protective layers that need very little grooming. It only requires periodic brushing and occasional baths. More frequent grooming sessions may be required during the shedding months. When brushing, use a bristle brush and extend the bristles to the skin to promote blood circulation and to remove dead skin. A protein coat conditioner can also be used to add shine and resistance.

Nails should be kept short by trimming regularly. It is important to keep your dogs ears clean by using a mineral oil soaked swab or q-tip. These dogs are prone to eye disorders so keep eyes healthy by removing mucous and debris immediately and paying close attention to any abnormalities and having regular eye exams. Maintain oral hygiene by brushing teeth and gums regularly with dog approved toothpaste and special teething biscuits made to remove plaque and tarter

Exercise is an especially important component to this dog's lifestyle. The owner needs to be an active part of his or her life and be committed to a physical fitness schedule. Stimulation is necessary and is achieved by allowing your canine to participate in new and exciting activities, teaching him new tricks, designating him jobs to do, and playing fun and exciting sports. If sufficient interest is not achieved this dog may become irritable or destructive.

Early obedience training is a must for this breed, especially if using as a family pet. Boundaries need to be set and followed. Activities and belongings need to be controlled by owner to clearly establish leadership. It is recommended to register the canine for professional obedience training at 6 months of age. Separate yourself at periodic intervals during the day and allow your dog to do a job. This will help him gain independence and not be so clingy.

Keep your canine safe by providing a dog friendly environment. Keep loose wires hidden and hazardous items out of reach. Sterilize toys often and keep your home clean and free of clutter. Toxic plants and materials need to be placed in an unreachable location. A large fenced in yard is recommended for exercise and play. Because of his biting instincts, post watchdog signs to warn others of entering uninvited and never let your dog roam around freely.

Now That You Are a Pet Owner

Being a pet owner is a rewarding experience. Over the years, you will build a strong relationship with your dog and he or she will become part of your family. If you treat your Australian Shepherd with love and respect you will build a trusting and devoted friendship that will bring you laughter and joy. The memories you and your Australian Shepherd share will touch your heart and last a lifetime. Remember to always look out for the best interest of your new companion and to be a responsible pet owner.



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