

# The Australian Shepherd

## Background

The name "Australian Shepherd" is somewhat misleading. In actuality this breed most likely emerged from the Pyrenees Mountains between Spain and France. It was associated by many with the Basque Shepherd, which did come to America from Australia. The breed was made popular in America after World War I. They were often found at rodeos, horse shows, and even made their way into main stream movies. They were bred for their work skills, and as such the shepherd likes to work!

## Sizing Up

- Size: Medium
- Weight: 30-65 pounds
- Height: 18-23 inches
- Coat: Thick
- Color: Black, Blue Merle, Red, Red Merle.
- Lifespan: 11-13 years

## What are they like?

The Australian Shepherd takes pride in a job well done. That is also to say they need a job. This isn't the type of dog to curl up at your feet for a movie marathon. They need intense workouts and a task that can satisfy them both physically and mentally. They're full of energy. They're great at dog sports, most notably herding. When herding cattle, instinct kicks in and they stay low, able to nimbly dodge kicks. With proper training they can compete in herding competitions. They're an intelligent breed, and fast learners. For that reason you'll need to be quick to correct bad behavior. They will remember everything that you let them get away with doing.

Aussies have a wonderful spectrum of colors, not just their coat but also their eyes, which might even be two different colors. They're an extremely unique breed with more than a little variation. Some are bred as herding dogs and others as show dogs. You should inquire with the breeder before you bring a new shepherd home.

Aussies are known to bare teeth when they smile, one of only a few breeds to do so. Although they are not

obsessive barkers, they will bark to protect their property, and warn you of nearby activity. Of course if you can't find constructive ways to channel their energy the barking might get worse.

Australian Shepherd's are at a greater risk for:

- [Hip Dysplasia](#)
- Patellar luxation
- Progressive Retinal Atrophy
- [MDR1 Gene](#)
- [Cataracts](#)
- Pelger Huet Anomaly

## Right breed for you?

- **Energy:** A high energy breed, Aussies must be engaged and physically active for 2-3 hours of the day.
- **Potentially destructive:** One way or another Aussies will need to use all of their energy. If you miss a day of exercise you might find yourself with one less pair of shoes, or worse!
- **Attention:** This is a people breed. They always want to be close to family.
- **Grooming:** Aussies thick coats require brushing once a week.

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*