

AUSTRALIAN CATTLE DOG

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour 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. 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 unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard has an effective date of 01/07/2025

ORIGIN

Australia.

UTILISATION

Cattle dog.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. from FCI Breed Standard No. 120:]

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. The 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.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Strong, compact, symmetrical, with substance, power and balance. Hard muscular condition conveys agility, strength, and endurance. Grossness or weediness undesirable.

CHARACTERISTICS

Ability to control and move cattle in all environments. Loyal, protective. Guardian of stockmen, herd, and property. Naturally suspicious of strangers, but amenable to handling. Biddable.

TEMPERAMENT

Alert, intelligent, watchful, courageous, trustworthy, devoted to its work.

HEAD & SKULL

Strong, in balance with body and general conformation. Skull broad and slightly curved between ears, flattening to slight but definite stop. Cheeks muscular but not coarse or prominent. Strong underjaw, deep and well-developed. Broad foreface, well filled in under eyes, tapers gradually down medium length muzzle which is parallel to skull. Nose always black.

Eyes:

Medium, oval, alert and intelligent, dark brown. Neither prominent nor sunken. Warning suspicious glint is characteristic.

Ears:

Moderate, small rather than large. Broad at base, muscular, pricked and moderately pointed. Oval or bat-eared undesirable. Set wide apart inclining outwards. Sensitive, pricked when alert. Leather thick in texture and inside ear well-furnished with hair.

Mouth:

Lips tight and clean. Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

NECK

Exceptionally strong, muscular, of medium length blending into body. Free from throatiness.

FOREQUARTERS

Strong, muscular, sloping shoulders well laid back, not too closely set at withers. Strong, round bone, legs straight when viewed from front, pasterns flexible and slightly sloping when viewed from side. Loaded shoulder and heavy front undesirable.

BODY

Slightly longer from point of shoulder to buttocks than height at withers, as 10 is to 9. Level topline, strong back and couplings. Well-sprung ribs, carried well back, but not barrel ribbed. Chest deep, muscular and moderately broad.

HINDQUARTERS

Broad, strong and muscular. Croup rather long and sloping. Thighs long, broad and well-developed. Well-turned stifle, hocks strong and well let down. When viewed from behind, hocks to feet straight and set parallel, neither too close nor too wide apart.

FEET

Round, short toes, strong, well-arched and held tight, pads hard and deep. Nails short and strong.

TAIL

Set on low, following slope of croup/rump. Reaching to hock, hanging in slight curve at rear. When working or excited, may be raised but never carried past a vertical line drawn through the root. Good brush.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

True, free, supple, tireless, with powerful thrust of hindquarters. Capable of quick and sudden action. Soundness of paramount importance. Stands four square, but when moving at speed, legs tend to converge. Any weaknesses highly undesirable.

COAT

Smooth, double with short dense undercoat. Close top coat, hard, straight and weather resistant. Under body and behind legs, coat is longer to form mild breeching near thighs. Short on head (including inside of ear) front of legs and feet. Thicker and longer on neck. Average hair length 2.5cm – 4cm (1" – 1½").

COLOUR

- **Blue:** Blue, blue-mottled or blue speckled with or without other markings. Permissible markings are black, blue or tan markings on head, evenly distributed for preference. Forelegs tan midway up legs and extending up the front to breast and throat, with tan on jaws. Hindquarters tan on inside of hindlegs, and inside of thighs, showing down front of stifles and broadening out to outside of hindlegs from hock to toes. Tan undercoat permissible on body providing it does not show through blue outer coat. Black markings on body undesirable.
- **Red Speckle:** Good even red speckle all over, including undercoat, (neither white nor cream), with or without darker red markings on head. Even head markings desirable. Red markings on body tolerated.

Any other colour or combination of colours unacceptable.

SIZE

Height at withers:

Males: 46cm – 51cm (approx. 18" – 20")

Females: 43cm – 48cm (approx. 17" – 19").

N.B. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally

and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.

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 upon the health and welfare of the dog.

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When judging this breed at FCI International Shows, use:

FCI Standard No 287: AUSTRALIAN CATTLE DOG

FCI Classification: Group 1 – Sheepdogs & Cattle dogs (except Swiss Cattle dogs)

Section 2. Cattle dogs (except Swiss Cattle dogs)

Without Working Trial.