

The Aussie is an extremely intelligent dog and you must put the time and effort into training your dog or they may train themselves and more than likely you will not like what they learn. Things such as teaching themselves to raid the trash, tear up personal property, or if all else fails, they will check out the neighborhood. Sometimes it can result in running after wild life or livestock, which can result in a death sentence at the shelter. On the positive side they usually train quickly and want to please.

Temperament

The Aussie temperament can vary greatly. There are lines of Aussies which are bred to work livestock. These dogs often have a more intense prey drive, are busier, often smaller in stature and may have sharper temperaments. They need work, activity, exercise and full time jobs.

Other lines are more on the mellow side having been bred more for companions rather than ranch helpers. They can be less driven, more laid back and less in need of a full time busy job.

The most important thing to realize about the Aussie is that they are usually very people oriented. They want to be with you at all times. They don't want to be left in the barn while you are back at the house. Chaining an Aussie can cause great frustration and often develops into behavioral problems. They don't want to be locked in the backyard while they could be laying at your feet.

Be cautious, diligent, realistic and HONEST about the type of personality and temperament that will fit into your household. If you are choosing an adult discuss in length with the rescue volunteer, owner or shelter worker your hopes and limitations.

Coat & Size

The Aussie's coat is of medium length. Depending on each individual the length and thickness can vary greatly. They do shed and require regular brushing. They normally blow their coat (shed heavily) twice a year requiring more brushing at that time. Then a weekly or possibly daily brushing will help maintain them the rest of the time, however, there will still be some furballs making their way onto your floor.

The size of an Aussie can vary from 30 to 70 pounds.

Starting with a Puppy

If you are getting a puppy, be prepared to accept the fact that you may get a dog either larger or smaller than you might have anticipated. The parents are a good indicator but that isn't always a certainty.

The purchase of a puppy may also mean the temperament or personality you are seeking may not be as expected. The breed has many similarities but each dog is an individual with its own personality, temperament and spirit. Discuss this in length with the rescue volunteer or breeder, from whom you are considering getting an Aussie.

Research the lineage of the puppy you might be considering. Realize if you get a puppy you will be going through the puppy stages of teething, fear periods, chewing, potty training etc. They will constantly be testing their limits and your patience.

Health

There are some genetic diseases within the breed. It is important to research thoroughly the potential for medical problems within any breed. Know which questions you need to ask

a breeder regarding their breeding practices and screening for genetic problems within their particular line. If you are considering a rescue dog, some of these problems can be ruled out.

The Aussie is for the most part a healthy breed with the most frequent hereditary problems being eye defects and hip dysplasia. Collie Eye Anomaly, and cataracts can also affect Aussies. Hip Dysplasia is a disease in which the hips undergo progressive changes that can result in severe and painful lameness. Other conditions that may affect the Aussie are epilepsy and thyroid disease.

Knowing the potential for genetic problems, you can better plan for the cost and care of your aging Aussie.

Consider some of the reasons we get dog's in the rescue program

* The dogs are not welcome in the house (and through boredom may dig holes, chew up the wooden deck, dig up valuable plants).

* Owners do not want to take the time to towel them off at the door during inclement weather.

*They won't work / herd (not all Aussies do have strong herding instinct, and even if they do they will need some training.) Some Aussies don't turn on to stock until more mature (2 years).

*Their owners do not have enough time to spend with them.

*They are herding all the neighbor's children and they do not wish to train or contain them.

*The Aussie and the household cat don't get along. Some Aussies like cats and get on fine with them, but not all do.

*They are too active. Their family does not have the time to give them enough exercise.

* They wanted an active dog but got one that is too sedate.

* They are chasing livestock or killing the chickens because they are not kept separate from the farm animals.

* Their owners would rather spend their paycheck on a vacation than medical care for the dog.

* Their owners like the green flawless look of their yard. Dog yards must be fenced, poop scooped and holes filled occasionally.

* They are unclaimed strays. Once again a victim of the bored puppy syndrome.

Things to Consider in Owning an Aussie

* You prefer to do my bathroom duties by yourself. An Aussie will want to supervise everything.

* Your interior car windows will need cleaning frequently unless you enjoy the challenge of peering through dried nose smears.

* You don't enjoy stopping your vacuuming to take apart the machine to clean out the dog hair.

* You would rather relax and watch TV then be a dog's personal entertainment specialist.

* Your face may get washed on a frequent basis by a 101.2 degree wet pink thing.

* You may be picking hair out of your food and explaining to guests it is a special fiber supplement.

Despite the above, owning an Aussie can or cannot be a laughing matter, depending on your point of view.

Could any of these be a problem for you?

Consider all of the above carefully before selecting an Aussie. If you decide an Aussie is not for you and choose another breed be diligent in the research of that breed as well. Choose a dog that will fit into your lifestyle concentrating on their temperament and personality rather than their appearance.

Second Time Around Aussie Rescue, Inc. is a California non-profit public benefit corporation and donations are tax deductible.

Our Reps, Foster Homes and Board of Directors are all volunteers and receive no payment except in the sense of accomplishment in placing a homeless Aussie into a loving caring and permanent home.

Our rescue efforts are supported solely by donations.

For more information about our program, to volunteer your help, adopt or place an Aussie please contact:

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Many thanks to author Hilary Hines. Not to be copied without written permission.

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Is an Aussie The Right Dog for You?

Australian Shepherds can be wonderful workmates and awesome companions when matched to their owners needs and abilities to provide the proper home for them. Are you really ready for an Aussie? Owning a dog is a commitment of 12-14 years and must not be entered into lightly. Dogs can be man's best friend. When you are ready to own one, be sure you are ready to be the dogs best friend as well.

Aussie Personality and Character

The Aussie is a herding breed which means they have prey drive to a varying degree. Many may want to herd your children, your neighbor's children, bicycles, the ducks, squirrels or dogs at the dog park, cars or passing joggers. This can include nipping at heels, hands or faces and in some cases could evolve into biting if not corrected through training. Even adults sometimes need to be herded in an Aussie's mind. This herding instinct can also mean chasing cats, or other animals and subsequently harm them. Cars and bicycles are also 'fair game' for the chase which can lead to dogs on the road and being hit. Because this instinct can sometimes overwhelm them, a fenced yard and obedience training can go a long way toward keeping them safe.

The Aussie is often a highly energetic dog. They require regular exercise, whether it be several walks a day, combined with Frisbee or ball playing. Agility is another outlet. Some Aussies have a more laid back temperament and become couch potatoes. For this reason it is important to select a dog with the temperament and energy level that will fit your lifestyle.