

AKC Gazette Column *- by Grace Cartwright*

About the AKC Breed Columns:

The Breed columns are a time-honored feature of the AKC Gazette. Each columnist is appointed by a breed's national parent club, which preserves the breed's standard and helps to educate breeders, judges, and the public about the breed's history, function, and possible health issues. A national parent club is comprised dedicated breeders and fanciers, and it represents many years of collective experience in the breed. Columnists are asked to write about topics of interest to the fancy in general as well as those of specific interest to judges and devotees of the breed.

Australian Terrier Column February 2012 Issue

What is your type?

When a dog person talks about "type", what does he mean?

Type is the set of characteristics that differentiate one breed of dog from any other breed. These characteristics, in addition to physical attributes, also include a combination of behavior, temperament and carriage that demonstrate the essence of that breed. For example, some of the key physical characteristics that define the Bloodhound include: ears that are extremely long and set very low and a superabundant amount of loose skin on the head which, when the head is carried low, falls into loose, pendulous ridges and folds, especially over the forehead and sides of the face. These characteristics, among others described in the Bloodhound breed standard, not only make him recognizable as a Bloodhound, they also allow him to do the job (track by scent) he was originally bred for in the first place. So, when a dog closely adheres to the breed standard he is said to be "typey."

Comparison of typey dogs of the same breed shows that there are sets of dogs that have characteristics that are similar to each other, yet are distinctly different from others of the breed. This distinct "look" or "style" could be created by a breeder within their line because of their slightly different interpretation of the breed standard. Different styles can also be created by groups of breeders geographically separated. For example, the style of head on the East Coast of the US can look very different from the style of head on the West Coast. It is natural to prefer one style over the other, but that doesn't make either style wrong, as long as both fulfill the guidelines described by the breed standard.

The Australian Terrier type is described by the breed standard, Clarification of the Standard and its history, all of which can be found under "About The Breed" tab on the Australian Terrier Club of America website (www.australiaterrier.org). He is a "fast, sturdy, weather-resistant and fearless little dog that the (Australian) settlers needed as they expanded the frontiers of their country." "This is a breed that was developed in a land of great variety, and it must be agile, sure footed, and



move with long, reaching, smooth and driving motion in order to fulfill its heritage as an all-around worker: one that excels at herding, guarding and vermin control."

The Aussie is a low-set terrier breed of medium bone and is somewhat longer in length in relation to height, which is 10-11 inches at the withers. The length comes not just from the length of back but also from the breastbone (keel) and correct angulations of the front and rear assemblies. "There should definitely be something to put your hands on in front of the forelegs (the keel) and behind the tail (buttocks)." The breed has a harsh outer-coat and a soft-under coat (Blue/Tan, Red or Sandy in color). A definite ruff of longer neck hair extends into an apron covering the breastbone and on under the body. A soft-textured topknot and an area of the muzzle that is free of hair in the adult dog are further characteristics used to describe breed type.

You can have a perfectly moving, sound specimen of a dog, but if he doesn't have breed type he isn't a good specimen of an Australian Terrier.