

= Australian Cattle Dog =

The Australian Cattle Dog (ACD) , or simply Cattle Dog , is a breed of herding dog originally developed in Australia for driving cattle over long distances across rough terrain . The Australian Cattle Dog is a medium @-@ sized , short @-@ coated dog that occurs in two main colour forms . It has either brown or black hair distributed fairly evenly through a white coat , which gives the appearance of a " red " or " blue " dog .

As with dogs from other working breeds , the Australian Cattle Dog is energetic and intelligent with an independent streak . It responds well to structured training , particularly if it is interesting and challenging . It was originally bred to herd by biting , and is known to nip running children . It forms a strong attachment to its owners , and can be protective of them and their possessions . It is easy to groom and maintain , requiring little more than brushing during the shedding period . The most common health problems are deafness and progressive blindness (both hereditary conditions) and accidental injury ; otherwise , it is a robust breed with a lifespan of 12 to 14 years .

In the 19th century , New South Wales cattle farmer Thomas Hall crossed the dogs used by drovers in his parents ' home county , Northumberland , with dingoes he had tamed . The resulting dogs were known as Halls Heelers . After Hall 's death in 1870 , the dogs became available beyond the Hall family and their associates . They were subsequently developed into two modern breeds : the Australian Cattle Dog and the Australian Stumpy Tail Cattle Dog . Robert Kaleski , who wrote the first standard for the breed , was influential in its development .

It has been nicknamed a " Red Heeler " or " Blue Heeler " on the basis of its colouring and practice of moving reluctant cattle by nipping at their heels . Dogs from a line bred in Queensland , Australia , which were successful at shows and at stud in the 1940s , were called " Queensland Heelers " to differentiate them from lines bred in New South Wales ; this nickname is now occasionally applied to any Australian Cattle Dog .

= = Characteristics = =

= = = Appearance = = =

The Australian Cattle Dog is a sturdy , muscular , compact dog that gives the impression of agility and strength . It has a broad skull that flattens to a definite stop between the eyes , with muscular cheeks and a medium @-@ length , deep , powerful muzzle . The ears are pricked , small to medium in size and set wide apart , with a covering of hair on the inside . The eyes are oval and dark , with an alert , keen expression . The neck and shoulders are strong and muscular ; the forelegs are straight and parallel ; and the feet round and arched , with small , sturdy toes and nails .

The Cattle Dog breed standard states that it should have well @-@ conditioned muscles , even when bred for companion or show purposes , and that its appearance should be symmetrical and balanced , with no individual part of the dog exaggerated . It should not look either delicate or cumbersome , as either characteristic limits the agility and endurance that is necessary for a working dog .

= = = Size = = =

The female Australian Cattle Dog measures approximately 43 ? 48 centimetres (17 ? 19 in) at the withers , and the male measures about 46 ? 51 centimetres (18 ? 20 in) at the withers . The dog should be longer than tall , that is , the length of the body from breast bone to buttocks is greater than the height at the withers , in a ratio of 10 to 9 . An Australian Cattle Dog in good condition weighs around 15 ? 22 kilograms (33 ? 49 lb) .

= = = Coat and colour = = =

There are two accepted coat colours , red and blue , though chocolate and cream do occur . Blue dogs can be blue , blue mottled , or blue speckled with or without black , tan , or white markings . Red dogs are evenly speckled with solid red markings . Both red dogs and blue dogs are born white (except for any solid @-@ coloured body or face markings) and the red or black hairs grow in as they mature . The distinctive adult colouration is the result of black or red hairs closely interspersed through a predominantly white coat . This is not merle colouration (a speckled effect that has associated health issues) , but rather the result of the ticking gene . A number of breeds show ticking , which is the presence of colour through white areas , though the overall effect depends on other genes that will modify the size , shape and density of the ticking .

In addition to the primary colouration , an Australian Cattle Dog displays some patches of solid or near @-@ solid colour . In both red and blue dogs , the most common are masks over one or both eyes , a white tip to the tail , a solid spot at the base of the tail , and sometimes solid spots on the body , though these are not desirable in dogs bred for conformation shows . Blue dogs can have tan midway up the legs and extending up the front to breast and throat , with tan on jaws , and tan eyebrows . Both colour forms can have a white " star " on the forehead called the " Bentley Mark " , after a legendary dog owned by Tom Bentley . Common miscolours in the Australian Cattle Dog are black hairs in a red @-@ coated dog , including the extreme of a black saddle on a red dog , and extensive tan on the face and body on a blue dog , called " creeping tan " . The Cattle Dog has a double coat ? the short , straight outer guard hairs are protective in nature , keeping the elements from the dog 's skin while the undercoat is short , fine and dense .

The mask consists of a black patch over one or both eyes (for the blue coat colour) or a red patch over one or both eyes (for the red coat colour) . Depending on whether one or both eyes have a patch , these are called , respectively , " single " (or " half ") mask and " double " (or " full ") mask . Dogs without a mask are called plain @-@ faced . Any of these are acceptable according to the breed standard . In conformation shows , even markings are preferred over uneven markings .

= = = Tail = = =

The breed standards of the Australian , American and Canadian kennel clubs specify that the Australian Cattle Dog should have a natural , long , un @-@ docked tail . There will often be a solid colour spot at the base of the tail and a white tip . The tail should be set moderately low , following the slope of the back . It should hang in a slight curve at rest , though an excited dog may carry its tail higher . The tail should feature a reasonable level of brush .

In the United States , tails are sometimes docked on working stock . The tail is not docked in Australia , and serves a useful purpose in increasing agility and the ability to turn quickly . The Australian Cattle Dog is a breed distinct from the Australian Stumpy Tail Cattle Dog , a square @-@ bodied dog born with a naturally " bobbed " tail . The Stumpy Tail resembles the Australian Cattle Dog , but has a taller , leaner conformation . It occasionally has a natural long thin tail , but most are born without tails .

= = = Temperament = = =

Like many working dogs , the Australian Cattle Dog has high energy levels , an active mind , and a level of independence . The breed ranks 10th in Stanley Coren 's The Intelligence of Dogs , rated as one of the most intelligent dogs ranked by obedience command trainability . The Cattle Dog needs plenty of exercise , companionship and a job to do , so a non @-@ working dog might participate in dog sports , learning tricks , or other activities that engage its body and mind .

When on home ground , the Australian Cattle Dog is an affectionate and playful pet . However , it is reserved with people it does not know and naturally cautious in new situations . Its attitude to strangers makes it an excellent guard dog when trained for this task , and it can be socialised to become accustomed to a variety of people from an early age as a family pet . It is good with older , considerate children , but will herd people by nipping at their heels , particularly younger children

who run and squeal . By the time puppies are weaned , they should have learned that the company of people is pleasurable , and that responding to cues from a person is rewarding . The bond that this breed can create with its owner is strong and will leave the dog feeling protective towards the owner , typically resulting in the dog 's never being too far from the owner 's side . The Australian Cattle Dog can be the friendliest of companions although it is quick to respond to the emotions of its owners , and may defend them without waiting for a command . The ACD was originally bred to move reluctant cattle by biting , and it will bite if treated harshly . The Australian Cattle Dog 's protective nature and tendency to nip at heels can be dangerous as the dog grows into an adult if unwanted behaviours are left unchecked .

While an Australian Cattle Dog generally works silently , it will bark in alarm or to attract attention . It has a distinctive intense , high @-@ pitched bark . Barking can be a sign of boredom or frustration , although research has shown that pet dogs increase their vocalisation when raised in a noisy environment . It responds well to familiar dogs , but when multiple dogs are present , establishing a pecking order can trigger aggression . It is not a breed that lives in a pack with other dogs .

Data accumulated from Council reports in New South Wales from April to June 2013 , showed that dogs identified as Australian Cattle Dogs were involved in 66 attacks , where an attack is defined as any incident where a dog rushes at , bites , harasses or chases any person or animal . Staffordshire Bull Terrier (155 attacks) , German Shepherd (89) and American Staffordshire Terrier (88) were reported to be involved in more incidents . Expressed as a percentage of registered dogs , 0 @. @ 1 % of Australian Cattle Dogs were involved in attacks . The data gathered in 2011 ? 2012 listed the ACD twenty @-@ seventh in involvement in incidents ranked by percentage of dogs registered . A review of incidents in Melbourne where a dog bit , rushed at or chased a person or animal in a public space , found that there were sixty breeds involved and the German Shepherd and German Shepherd crosses , and Australian Cattle Dog and Cattle Dog crosses accounted for 9 % of incidents . Surveys of U.S. breed club members showed that both dog @-@ directed aggression and stranger @-@ directed aggression were higher in the ACD than the average of breeds studied , with dog @-@ directed aggression being the more prevalent of the two aggression types . The American Temperament Test Society reports a test pass rate of 79 @. @ 3 % for Australian Cattle Dogs . The average pass rate for all breeds is 80 @. @ 4 % .

= = As pets = =

= = = Grooming = = =

Known as a " wash and wear " dog , the Australian Cattle Dog requires little grooming , and an occasional brushing is all that is required to keep the coat clean and odour @-@ free . Even for the show ring it needs no more than wiping down with a moist cloth . It is not a year @-@ round shedder but blows its coat once a year (twice in the case of intact females) and frequent brushing and a warm bath during this period will contain the shedding hair . As with all dogs , regular attention to nails , ears and teeth will help avoid health problems .

= = = Training = = =

In Katherine Buetow 's guide to the Australian Cattle Dog , Ian Dunbar makes the point that while people think of dog training as teaching a dog to sit , speak and roll over , the dog already knows how to do these things . Training , he says , involves teaching the dog that it is a good idea to do these things when a particular word is said or signal is given . He goes on to explain his belief that training is about opening communication channels , so that the dog knows what the handler wants it to do , and knows that it will be worth its while to do it . Consequences for the dog can be rewards for doing what is required , as recommended by Dunbar , or corrections where an unwanted behaviour is performed . Like other working breeds , the Australian Cattle Dog is intelligent and responsive ; both of these traits can be an advantage in training where a structured , varied program

is used , but can lead to unwanted outcomes if training is not consistent , or is repetitive and boring for the dog . Stock dog trainer Scott Lithgow recommends making training a game so the Cattle Dog learns that obedience leads to enjoyment . Many of a Cattle Dog 's natural behaviours are undesirable in a pet : barking , chewing , chasing , digging , defending territory , and nipping heels . Training , therefore , involves helping the dog adopt a lifestyle that is probably very different from that of its droving ancestors . The Australian Cattle Dog is biddable , and responds well to training .

= = = Activities = = =

The Australian Cattle Dog demands a high level of physical activity . Like many other herding dog breeds , the Cattle Dog has an active and fertile mind and if it is not given jobs to do it will find its own activities . It will appreciate a walk around the neighbourhood , but it needs structured activities that engage and challenge it , and regular interaction with its owner . While individual dogs have their own personalities and abilities , as a breed the Australian Cattle Dog is suited to any activity that calls for athleticism , intelligence , and endurance .

Kennel club @-@ sponsored herding trials with a range of events suit the driving abilities of the Cattle Dog and other upright breeds , while sheepdog trials are more suited to the " eye " breeds such as the Border Collie and Australian Kelpie . Herding instincts and trainability are measured at non @-@ competitive herding tests , and basic commands are sometimes taught through herding games , where rules such as " stay " , " get it " and " that 'll do " are applied to fetching a ball or chasing a yard broom .

The Australian Cattle Dog was developed for its ability to encourage reluctant cattle to travel long distances and may be the best breed in the world for this work . However , some working dog trainers have expressed concern that dogs bred for the show ring are increasingly too short in the legs and too stocky in the body to undertake the work for which they were originally bred .

Among the most popular activities for an Australian Cattle Dog is dog agility . It is ideally suited for navigating obstacle courses , since as a herding dog it is reactive to the handler 's body language and willing to work accurately at a distance from the handler . Agility has been used by Cattle Dog owners to instil confidence in their dogs , and enhance their performance in training and competition .

The Australian Cattle Dog thrives on change and new experiences , and many handlers find training the breed challenging for this reason . An Australian Cattle Dog can excel in obedience competition . It will enjoy the challenges , such as retrieving a scented article , but the breed 's problem @-@ solving ability may lead it to find solutions to problems that are not necessarily rewarded by the obedience judges . Rally obedience offers more interaction with the owner and less repetition than traditional obedience trials .

Australian Cattle Dogs have been successful in a range of dog sports including weight pulling , flyball and schutzhund . The breed is particularly suited to activities that a dog can share with its owner such as canicross , disc dog , and skijoring or bikejoring . It is an effective hiking companion because of its natural endurance , its general lack of interest in hunting , and preference for staying by its owner 's side . Most Australian Cattle Dogs love the water and are excellent swimmers . It is not a hyperactive breed , and once one has had its exercise , it is happy to lie at its owner 's feet , or to rest in its bed or crate while keeping an ear and eye open for signs of pending activity . The Australian Cattle Dog is an adaptable dog that can accept city or indoor living conditions , if its considerable exercise and companionship needs are met .

The Australian Cattle Dog can be put to work in a number of ways . Cattle Dogs are service dogs for people with a disability or are therapy dogs , some work for customs agencies in drug detection , some as police dogs , others haze pest animals , such as geese , for city or state agencies , and some work as scat @-@ detection dogs , tracking endangered wildlife species .

= = Health and lifespan = =

== Lifespan ==

In a small sample of 11 deceased dogs , Australian Cattle Dogs had a median longevity of 11 @.@ 7 years (maximum 15 @.@ 9 yrs) . A larger survey of 100 deceased dogs yielded a mean longevity of 13 @.@ 41 years with a standard deviation of 2 @.@ 36 years . The median longevitys of breeds of similar size are between 11 and 13 years . There is an anecdotal report of a Cattle Dog named Bluey , born in 1910 and living for 29 @.@ 5 years , but the record is unverified . Even if true , Bluey 's record age would have to be regarded more as an uncharacteristic exception than as an indicator of common exceptional longevity for the entire breed . It remains , however , that Australian Cattle Dogs generally age well and appear to live on average almost a year longer than most dogs of other breeds in the same weight class . Many members of the breed are still well and active at 12 or 14 years of age , and some maintain their sight , hearing and even their teeth until their final days .

== Common health problems ==

The Australian Cattle Dog carries recessive piebald alleles that produce white in the coat and skin and are linked to congenital hereditary deafness , though it is possible that there is a multi @-@ gene cause for deafness in a dog with the piebald pigment genes . Around 2 @.@ 4 % of Cattle Dogs in one study were found to be deaf in both ears and 14 @.@ 5 % were deaf in at least one ear .

The Australian Cattle Dog is one of the dog breeds affected by progressive retinal atrophy . It has the most common form , progressive rod @-@ cone degeneration (PRCD) , a condition that causes the rods and cones in the retina of the eye to deteriorate later in life , resulting in blindness . PRCD is an autosomal recessive trait and a dog can be a carrier of the affected gene without developing the condition .

Hip dysplasia is not common in the breed , although it occurs sufficiently often for many breeders to have their breeding stock tested . The Cattle Dog has a number of inherited conditions , but most of these are not common . Hereditary polioencephalomyelopathy of the Australian Cattle Dog is a very rare condition caused by an inherited biochemical defect . Dogs identified with the condition were completely paralysed within their first year . Based on a sample of 69 still @-@ living dogs , the most common health issues noted by owners were musculoskeletal (spondylosis , elbow dysplasia , and arthritis) and reproductive (pyometra , infertility , and false pregnancy) , and blindness . A study of dogs diagnosed at Veterinary Colleges in the United States and Canada over a thirty @-@ year period described fractures , lameness and cruciate ligament tears as the most common conditions in the Australian Cattle Dogs treated .

== History ==

== In Australia ==

George Hall and his family arrived in the New South Wales Colony in 1802 . By 1825 , the Halls had established two cattle stations in the Upper Hunter Valley , and had begun a northward expansion into the Liverpool Plains , New England and Queensland . Getting his cattle to the Sydney markets presented a problem in that thousands of head of cattle had to be moved for thousands of kilometres along unfenced stock routes through sometimes rugged bush and mountain ranges . A note , in his own writing , records Thomas Hall 's anger at losing 200 head in scrub .

A droving dog was needed , but the colonial working dogs are understood to have been of the Old English Sheepdog type , commonly referred to as Smithfields . Descendants of these dogs still exist , but are useful only over short distances and for yard work with domesticated cattle . Thomas Hall addressed the problem by importing several of the dogs used by drovers in Northumberland , his parents ' home county . At that time dogs were generally described by their job , regardless of

whether they constituted a breed as it is currently understood . In the manner of the time , the Hall family historian , A. J. Howard , gave these blue mottled dogs a name : Northumberland Blue Merle Drovers Dog .

Thomas Hall crossed his Drovers Dogs with dingoes he had tamed , and by 1840 was satisfied with his resulting progeny . During the next thirty years , the Halls Heelers , as they became known , were used only by the Halls . Given that they were dependent on the dogs , which gave them an advantage over other cattle breeders , it is understandable that the dogs were not distributed beyond the Hall 's properties . It was not until after Thomas Hall 's death in 1870 , when the properties went to auction with the stock on them , that Halls Heelers became freely available .

By the 1890s , the dogs had attracted the attention of the Cattle Dog Club of Sydney , a group of men with a recreational interest in the new practice of showing dogs competitively . None were stockmen working cattle on a daily basis , and initially they were interested in a range of working dogs , including the Smithfield . They reportedly adopted the term " Australian Cattle Dog " to refer to the dogs being bred from bloodlines originating from Thomas Hall 's " heelers " , and prominent members of the group concentrated on breeding these lines . Of these breeders , the Bagust family was the most influential . Robert Kaleski , of Moorebank , a young associate of Harry Bagust , wrote " in 1893 when I got rid of my cross @-@ bred cattle dogs and took up the blues , breeders of the latter had started breeding ... to fix the type . I drew up a standard for them on those lines " . This first breed standard for the Cattle Dog breed was published , with photographs , by the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in 1903 .

Kaleski 's standard was adopted by breed clubs in Queensland and New South Wales and re @-@ issued as their own , with local changes . His writings from the 1910s give an important insight into the early history of the breed . However , dog breeder and author Noreen Clark has noted that his opinions are sometimes just that , and he introduces some contradictory assertions in his later writings , as well as some assumptions that are illogical in the light of modern science . Some of these have persisted ; for example he saw the red colour form as having more dingo in it than the blue form , and there is a persistent belief that reds are more vicious than blues . The most enduring of Kaleski 's myths relate to Dalmatian and Kelpie infusions into the early Cattle Dog breed . These infusions are not referred to in Kaleski 's writings until the 1920s and it seems likely that Kaleski sought to explain the Cattle Dog 's mottled colouration and tan on legs by similarity to the Dalmatian and Kelpie , respectively . The genetics of coat colour , and the current understanding of hereditary characteristics , make the infusion of Dalmatian to increase the cattle dog 's tolerance of horses an extremely unlikely event . There were relatively few motor vehicles in Australia at the beginning of the 20th century , so most dogs of any breed would have been accustomed to horses . The Kelpie breed was developed after the Cattle Dog type was described , so its infusion is unlikely . It is possible that there was some infusion of Bull Terrier but there is no verifiable record of this , and the Cattle Dog has not had the Bull Terrier 's instinct to bite and hold , which would have been an undesirable trait . Early in the 1900s there was considerable in @-@ fighting amongst members of the Cattle Dog Club , and a series of arguments about the origin of the breed appeared in newspapers and journals of the time . While many of these arguments were misleading , some irrational , and the majority not supported by historical facts , they continue to be circulated , resulting in a number of theories on the origins of the breed . In recent years , information technology enabling the manipulation of large databases combined with advances in the understanding of canine genetics has allowed a clearer understanding of the development of the breed .

Through the 1890s , Cattle Dogs of Halls Heeler derivations were seen in the kennels of exhibiting Queensland dog breeders such as William Byrne of Booval , and these were a different population from those shown in New South Wales . Little Logic was bred in Rockdale , New South Wales , however Sydney exhibitors saw Little Logic for the first time after the dog had been added to the Hillview kennels of Arch Bevis in Brisbane . The show records of Little Logic and his offspring created a demand in New South Wales for Queensland dogs . By the end of the 1950s , there were few Australian Cattle Dogs whelped that were not descendants of Little Logic and his best known son , Logic Return . The success and popularity of these dogs led to the growth of the nickname "

Queensland Heeler " .

The prominence of Little Logic and Logic Return in the pedigrees of modern Australian Cattle Dogs was perpetuated by Wooleston Kennels . For some twenty years , Wooleston supplied foundation and supplementary breeding stock to breeders in Australia , North America and Continental Europe . As a result , Wooleston Blue Jack is ancestral to most , if not all , Australian Cattle Dogs whelped since 1990 in any country .

= = = In the United States = = =

In the 1940s Alan McNiven , a Sydney veterinarian , introduced Dingo , Kelpie , German Shepherd , and Kangaroo Hound into his breeding program ; however , the Royal Agricultural Society Kennel Club (RASKC) would not register the cross breeds as Australian Cattle Dogs , even though McNiven argued they were true to conformation , colour and temperament . McNiven responded by giving his pups registration papers from dead dogs , and was consequently expelled from the RASKC and all of his dogs removed from the registry . Meanwhile , Greg Lougher , a Napa , California cattle rancher who met Alan McNiven while stationed in Australia during World War II , had imported several adults and several litters from McNiven . After his de @-@ registration McNiven continued to export his " improved " dogs to the United States . Many U.S. soldiers who were stationed in Queensland or NSW during the War discovered the Australian Cattle Dog and took one home when they returned .

In the late 1950s a veterinarian in Santa Rosa , California , Jack Woolsey , was introduced to Lougher 's dogs . With his partners , he bought several dogs and started breeding them . The breeders advertised the dogs in Western Horsemen stating they were guaranteed to work and calling them Queensland Heelers . Woolsey imported several purebred Australian Cattle Dogs to add to his breeding program , including Oaklea Blue Ace , Glen Iris Boomerang and several Glen Iris bitches . The National Stock Dog Registry of Butler , Indiana , registered the breed , assigning American numbers without reference to Australian registrations .

Australian Cattle Dogs had been classified in the " miscellaneous " category at the American Kennel Club (AKC) since the 1930s ; to get the breed full recognition , the AKC required that a National Breed Parent Club be organised for promotion and protection of the breed . In 1967 Esther Ekman met Chris Smith @-@ Risk at an AKC show , and the two fell into conversation about their Australian Cattle Dogs and the process of establishing a parent club for the breed . By 1969 the fledgling club had 12 members and formally applied to the AKC for instructions . One of the requirements was that the Club had to start keeping its own registry for the breed and that all dogs on the registry would have to be an extension of the Australian registry , tracing back to registered dogs in Australia . The AKC Parent Club members began researching their dogs , including exchanging correspondence with McNiven , and discovered that few of them had dogs that could be traced back to dogs registered in Australia . The AKC took over the club registry in 1979 and the breed was fully recognised in September 1980 . The Australian Cattle Dog Club of America is still active in the promotion of the breed and the maintenance of breed standards . The National Stock Dog Registry continued to recognise Cattle Dogs without prerequisite links to Australian registered dogs , on the condition that any dog of unknown parentage that was presented for registry would be registered as an " American Cattle Dog " , and all others would still be registered as " Australian Cattle Dogs " .

= = = In Canada = = =

The breed gained official recognition from the Canadian Kennel Club in January 1980 after five years of collecting pedigrees , gathering support , and lobbying officials by two breeders and enthusiasts . The small number of Australian Cattle Dogs in Canada at the time were primarily working dogs on farms and ranches scattered across large distances . However , the fledgling breed club held conformation shows , obedience and agility competitions , and entered their dogs in sports including flyball and lure coursing . At the end of 1980 , Landmaster Carina was named the first

Australian Cattle Dog in Canada to gain both her conformation and obedience titles .

= = = In the United Kingdom = = =

The first registered Australian Cattle Dogs to arrive in the United Kingdom were two blue puppies , Lenthal Flinton and Lenthal Darlot , followed in 1980 by Landmaster Darling Red in whelp . Landmaster Darling Red was imported by John and Mary Holmes , and proved to be an outstanding brood bitch . Over the next few years additional Cattle Dogs arrived in the UK from the Netherlands , Kenya , Germany and Australia , although prior to relaxation of rules regarding artificial insemination , the UK gene pool was limited . In 1985 an Australian Cattle Dog Society was formed and officially recognised by the Kennel Club ; before this they had to compete in the category " Any Variety Not Separately Classified " . Australian Cattle Dogs were competing successfully in obedience and working trials in the UK during the 1980s .

= = Cross breeds = =

The Texas Heeler is a cross between the Australian Cattle Dog and the Australian Shepherd that was first registered with the Animal Research Foundation (ARF) in 1970 . The ARF has registered Australian Cattle Dogs without papers as " Australian Cattle Dog Queensland Heelers " since 1965 and was the first organisation to recognise the Australian Shepherd . Although originally bred for its ability to work cattle , the Texas Heeler is increasingly used as a pet and a companion in dog sports . As with most cross breeds , the Texas Heeler 's size and appearance is a variable combination of the parent breeds .