

## American King Shepherd

### Breed Organization

The American King Shepherd Club, Inc.

Website: <http://americankingshepherdclubinc.com>

### Native Country

United States of America

### Other Names

King Shepherd

### Breed Description

**General Appearance:** The King Shepherd possesses size; thick, dense bone; a well-muscled torso and a strong impressive head. He is large, rugged, powerful and impressive, possessing great endurance and agility. Developed through a set of demanding circumstances for a purely utilitarian purpose, he is a working guard dog without equal, with a unique ability to protect livestock. He possesses a keen intelligence and a kindly, while regal, expression. Exhibiting a unique elegance of bearing and movement with purpose; his soundness and coordination embodies the unmistakable intent for which he has been bred.

**Size:** The height at the highest point of the withers should be a minimum of 27 inches for dogs, and a minimum of 25 inches for bitches. The minimum weight for a dog is 110 pounds with the ideal weight being 120-145 pounds. The minimum weight for a bitch is 80 pounds with an ideal weight being 90-110 pounds. Weight: is in proportion to the overall size and structure with preference given to the larger. A dog or bitch measuring under the minimum height and weight limits specified shall be disqualified. The dog's appearance is more massive throughout than the bitch's. Large size is desirable, but never at the expense of balance and structure.

**Proportion:** The King Shepherd is a balanced dog with the height measured at the withers being somewhat less than the length of the body measured from the point of the shoulder to the rearmost projection of the upper thigh (buttocks). The proportions of 10-11.5 create a slightly rectangular dog. Front and rear angulations are balanced.

**Substance:** He is a dog of considerable substance which is determined by spring of rib, strong muscle, and heavy bone.

**Head:** The King Shepherd is distinguished by his immense, square and well defined head. The large square head is a key essence of breed type. The head: is broad and deep, not coarse or clumsy, but in proportion to the size of the dog, planes of the skull and muzzle are parallel. The muzzle is square, blunt, with level and parallel planes, and is in equal proportion to the back skull; when measured from the tip of the nose to insertion of the stop. Demonstrating a strong well developed underjaw.

**Skull:** is measured from the point of stop to the far most point of the occiput. The furrow is moderately defined with slightly arched frontal bones lending to a well defined stop. The skull is broad and moderately rounded between the ears, gradually narrowing and flattening on top as it approaches the eyes, rounding off to cheeks that are moderately curved, and when viewed from the top should be much in the form of a trapezoid, and well filled in under the eyes.

**Expression:** keen, intelligent and composed.

**Eyes:** of medium size, almond shaped, set a little obliquely and not protruding. The color is as dark as possible ranging through shades of brown. On lighter colored dogs lighter eyes are permissible but not desired.

**Ears:** are moderately pointed, in proportion to the skull, open toward the front, and carried erect when at attention, the ideal carriage being one in which the center lines of the ears, viewed from the front, are parallel to each other, high set, and perpendicular to the ground. A dog with cropped or hanging ears must be disqualified.



**Teeth:** 42 in numbers--20 upper and 22 lower--are strongly developed and meet in a scissors bite in which part of the inner surface of the upper incisors meet and engage part of the outer surface of the lower incisors. Complete dentition is to be preferred.

**Neck:** Robust, strongly muscled, of medium length, well set on the shoulders and is long enough for proud head carriage with no evidence of dewlap or throatiness. The neck is carried erect when excited and typically above the horizontal aspect of the topline when gaiting.

**Topline:** The backline is level. The back is strong, broad, and muscular and is level from just behind the withers to the croup. The chest is full and deep with the brisket reaching at least down to the elbows. Ribs are well sprung, with the anterior third of the rib cage tapered to allow elbow clearance.

**Body:** The chest is moderately broad. The rib cage is well sprung, oval in shape, and of sufficient depth to reach the elbows. Back and loin are broad and strongly coupled with some tuck-up. The croup is gently sloping with the tail set on just below the level of the back.

**Tail:** The tail is well plumed, carried low in repose and may not be carried over the back. The tail is broad at the base and strong. It has no kinks, and the distal bone reaches to the hock. When standing relaxed, the tail hangs straight or with a slight curve at the end. In motion the tail is down and slightly curved or out when gaiting. If the dog becomes excited it may raise the tail, and it will become more curved without going beyond the vertical aspect of the back, but it does not curl or lie over the back.

**Shoulders:** The shoulders are well laid back, well muscled, and lie close to the body. The upper arm meets the shoulder blade at approximately a right angle. The upper arm angles backward from the point of the shoulder to the elbow and is never perpendicular to the ground. The length of the shoulder blade and the upper arm is approximately equal. The height from the ground to the elbow appears approximately equal to the height from the elbow to the withers.

**Forelegs:** The legs are of thick, dense bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. The elbows are close to the body and point directly to the rear when standing and gaiting. The forelegs, when viewed from the side, are located directly under the withers and are straight and vertical to the ground. The elbows, when viewed from the front, are set in a straight line from the point of shoulder to the wrist. Front pasterns are strong and flexible. Each foreleg may carry a single dewclaw.

**Front Feet:** Rounded, close-cupped, well cushioned pads, toes well arched. There is a protective growth of hair between the toes. The pads are thick and tough; toenails short and strong.

**Hindquarters:** The rear assembly is powerful, muscular, and heavily boned. Viewed from the rear, the legs are straight and parallel. Viewed from the side, the thighs are broad and fairly long. Stifles and hocks are well bent and the line from hock to ground is perpendicular. Hocks are well let down.

**Hind Feet:** are similar to the front feet. Rear legs-- are broad and heavily muscled through the thighs; when viewed from the rear, the legs stand and move true in line with the movement of the front legs, not too close or too wide. Dewclaws on the rear legs are undesirable and should be removed shortly after puppies are whelped.

**Coat:** The ideal dog has a rough coat of moderate length, a smooth coated type of King Shepherds exist, and is equally acceptable. A slightly wavy outer coat should be as dense as possible, hair straight, harsh and lying close to the body. The head, including the inner ear and foreface, and the legs and paws are covered with short hair, and the neck with longer and thicker hair. The rear of the forelegs and hind legs has somewhat longer hair extending to the pastern and hock, respectively.

**Color and Markings:** The King Shepherd Dog varies in color, and many colors are permissible. Strong rich colors are preferred. Colors are as follows: Sable (a brown/red with black markings or a tan/cream with black markings); bi-colored (predominantly black with red, tan or cream); black saddle with red, tan, gold or cream, and solid black.

**Markings:** Small areas of white, the smaller the better, are permissible on the chest, toes, tail.

**Gait:** The gait of the King Shepherd in motion has strong reach and drive, and gives the impression of effortless power. He moves with a purpose. He is a trotter; He is agile for his size and build. When viewed from the side, the hindquarters exhibit strong rear drive that is transmitted through a well-muscled loin to the forequarters. The forequarters receive the drive from the rear with a smooth reaching stride. When viewed from the front or from the rear, forelegs and hind legs travel straight forward, neither too close nor too wide. His gait is powerful, pronounced, demanding and rhythmic, covering the maximum amount of ground with the minimum number of steps. As the dog's speed increases, the legs tend toward single tracking. Essential to good movement is the balance of correct front and rear assemblies.

## Function

The breed has a distinct personality marked by direct and fearless, but not hostile, expression, self-confidence and a certain aloofness that does not lend itself to immediate and indiscriminate friendships. The dog must be approachable, quietly standing its ground and showing confidence and willingness to meet overtures without itself making them.

It is poised, but when the occasion demands, eager and alert; both fit and willing to serve in its capacity as companion, watchdog, herding dog, or guardian, whichever the circumstances may demand. The dog must not be timid, shrinking behind its master or handler; it should not be nervous, looking about or upward with anxious expression or showing nervous reactions, to strange sounds or sights, such as tucking of tail. Lack of confidence under any surroundings is not typical of good character. The ideal dog is a working animal with an incorruptible character combined with body and gait suitable for the arduous work that constitutes its primary purpose.

## **Physical Characteristics - General Canine Information**

Many dogs, such as the American Water Spaniel, have had their natural hunting instincts suppressed or altered to suit human needs. Modern dog breeds show more variation in size, appearance, and behavior than any other domestic animal. Within the range of extremes, dogs generally share attributes with their wild ancestors, the wolves. Dogs are predators and scavengers, possessing sharp teeth and strong jaws for attacking, holding, and tearing their food. Although selective breeding has changed the appearance of many breeds, all dogs retain basic traits from their distant ancestors. Like many other predatory mammals, the dog has powerful muscles, fused wristbones, a cardiovascular system that supports both sprinting and endurance, and teeth for catching and tearing. Compared to the bone structure of the human foot, dogs technically walk on their toes.

**Sight:** Like most mammals, dogs are dichromats and have color vision equivalent to red-green color blindness in humans.

Different breeds of dogs have different eye shapes and dimensions, and they also have different retina configurations. Dogs with long noses have a "visual streak" which runs across the width of the retina and gives them a very wide field of excellent vision, while those with short noses have an "area centralis" - a central patch with up to three times the density of nerve endings as the visual streak — giving them detailed sight much more like a human's.

Some breeds, particularly the sighthounds, have a field of vision up to 270° (compared to 180° for humans), although broad-headed breeds with short noses have a much narrower field of vision, as low as 180°.

**Hearing:** Dogs detect sounds as low as the 16 to 20 Hz frequency range (compared to 20 to 70 Hz for humans) and above 45 kHz[22] (compared to 13 to 20 kHz for humans), and in addition have a degree of ear mobility that helps them to rapidly pinpoint the exact location of a sound. Eighteen or more muscles can tilt, rotate and raise or lower a dog's ear. Additionally, a dog can identify a sound's location much faster than a human can, as well as hear sounds up to four times the distance that humans are able to. Those with more natural ear shapes, like those of wild canids like the fox, generally hear better than those with the floppier ears of many domesticated species.

**Smell:** Scent hounds, especially the Bloodhound, are iconic for their keen sense of smell. Dogs have nearly 220 million smell-sensitive cells over an area about the size of a pocket handkerchief (compared to 5 million over an area the size of a postage stamp for humans). Some breeds have been selectively bred for excellence in detecting scents, even compared to their canine brethren. What information a dog actually detects when he is scenting is not perfectly understood; although once a matter of debate, it now seems to be well established that dogs can distinguish two different types of scents when trailing, an air scent from some person or thing that has recently passed by, as well as a ground scent that remains detectable for a much longer period.

The characteristics and behavior of these two types of scent trail would seem, after some thought, to be quite different, the air scent being intermittent but perhaps less obscured by competing scents, whereas the ground scent would be relatively permanent with respect to careful and repetitive search by the dog, but would seem to be much more contaminated with other scents. In any event, it is established by those who train tracking dogs that it is impossible to teach the dog how to track any better than it does naturally; the object instead is to motivate it properly, and teach it to maintain focus on a single track and ignore any others that might otherwise seem of greater interest to

an untrained dog. An intensive search for a scent, for instance searching a ship for contraband, can actually be very fatiguing for a dog, and the dog must be motivated to continue this hard work for a long period of time.

The meaning of "intelligence" in general, not only in reference to dogs, is hard to define. Some tests measure problem-solving abilities and others test the ability to learn in comparison to others of the same age. Defining it for dogs is just as difficult. It is likely that dogs do not have the ability to premeditate an action to solve a problem.

**Coat Color:** Domestic dogs often display the remnants of counter-shading, a common natural camouflage pattern. The general theory of countershading is that an animal that is lit from above will appear lighter on its upper half and darker on its lower half where it will usually be in its own shade. This is a pattern that predators can learn to watch for. A countershaded animal will have dark coloring on its upper surfaces and light coloring below. This reduces the general visibility of the animal. One reminder of this pattern is that many breeds will have the occasional "blaze", stripe, or "star" of white fur on their chest or undersides.

**Sprint Metabolism:** Dogs can generate large amounts of energy for a short period of time. A dog's heart and lungs are oversized relative to its body and its normal everyday needs. A dog also has relatively more red blood cells than a human. Most of the time the dog will keep the extra red blood cells stored in its spleen. When the animal enters into a situation where its full metabolism is required, such as play, catching game, or fighting other dogs, the extra cells are released into the bloodstream. The "oversized" heart and lungs will now be running at full capacity, and the animal will have an enhanced ability to engage in aerobic activity. This activity will produce internal heating. Dogs, being covered in fur, are limited in their ability to cool down. After a short time the animal must either cease its athletic activity or risk harming itself from overheating. One can easily observe this pattern of intense activity followed by rest periods in puppies. During the rest phase the spleen collects red blood cells and the animal may pant to cool down.

**Behavior and Intelligence:** Many dogs can be trained to skillfully perform tasks not natural to canines, such as in this dog agility competition. Dogs are valued for their intelligence. This intelligence is expressed differently with different breeds and individuals, however. For example, Border Collies are noted for their ability to learn commands, while other breeds may not be so motivated towards obedience, but instead show their cleverness in devising ways to steal food or escape from a yard. Being highly adaptable animals themselves, dogs have learned to do many jobs as required by humans over the generations.

Dogs are employed in various roles across the globe, proving invaluable assets in areas such as search-and-rescue; law enforcement (including attack dogs, sniffer dogs and tracking dogs); guards for livestock, people or property; herding; Arctic exploration sled-pullers; guiding the blind and acting as a pair of ears for the deaf; assisting with hunting, and a great many other roles which they may be trained to assume. Most dogs rarely have to deal with complex tasks and are unlikely to learn relatively complicated activities (such as opening doors) unaided. Some dogs (such as guide dogs for the visually impaired) are specially trained to recognize and avoid dangerous situations.

For example, the ability to learn quickly could be a sign of intelligence. Conversely it could be interpreted as a sign of a desire to please. In contrast, some dogs who do not learn very quickly may have other talents. An example is breeds that are not particularly interested in pleasing their owners, such as Siberian Huskies. Huskies are often fascinated with the myriad of possibilities for escaping from yards, catching small animals, and often figuring out on their own numerous inventive ways of doing both.

Assistance dogs are also required to be obedient at all times. This means they must learn a tremendous number of commands, understand how to act in a large variety of situations, and recognize threats to their human companion, some of which they might never before have encountered.

Many owners of livestock guardian breeds believe that breeds like the Great Pyrenees or the Kuvasz are not easily trained because their stubborn nature prevents them from seeing the point of such commands as "sit" or "down". Hounds may also suffer from this type of ranking. These dogs are bred to have more of a "pack" mentality with other dogs and less reliance on a master's direct commands. While they may not have the same kind of intelligence as a Border Collie, they were not bred to learn and obey commands quickly, but to think for themselves while trailing game.

**Human Relationships:** Dogs have been used for a wide variety of purposes in human history. Dogs are highly social animals sometimes regarded as the most social animals on earth. This can account for their trainability, playfulness, and ability to fit into human households and social situations. This similarity has earned dogs a unique position in the realm of interspecies relationships despite being one of the most effective and potentially dangerous predators. Dogs and humans at times co-operate in some of the most effective hunting in the animal world; in that context, dogs are superpredators.

The loyalty and devotion that dogs demonstrate as part of their natural instincts as pack animals closely mimics the human idea of love and friendship, leading many dog owners to view their pets as full-fledged family members. Conversely, dogs seem to view their human companions as members of their pack, and make few, if any, distinctions between their owners and fellow dogs. Dogs fill a variety of roles in human society and are often trained as working dogs. For dogs that do not have traditional jobs, a wide range of dog sports provide the opportunity to exhibit their natural skills. In many countries, the most common and perhaps most important role of dogs is as companions.

Dogs have lived and worked with humans in so many roles that their loyalty has earned them the unique sobriquet "man's best friend".

**Dog Communication:** Laughter might not be confined or unique to humans, despite Aristotle's observation that "only the human animal laughs". The differences between chimpanzee and human laughter may be the result of adaptations that have evolved to enable human speech. However, some behavioral psychologists argue that self-awareness of one's situation, or the ability to identify with somebody else's predicament, are prerequisites for laughter, so animals are not really laughing in the same way that humans do. The dog-laugh sounds similar to a normal pant. However by analyzing the pant using a spectrograph, this pant varies with bursts of frequencies, resulting in a laugh. When this recorded dog-laugh vocalization is played to dogs in a shelter setting, it can initiate play, promote pro-social behavior, and decrease stress levels. In a study by Simonet, Versteeg, and Storie, one hundred and twenty subject dogs residing in a mid-size county animal shelter were observed. Dogs ranging from 4 months to 10 years of age were compared with and without exposure to a dog-laugh recording. The stress behaviors measured included panting, growling, salivating, pacing, barking, cowering, lunging, play-bows, sitting, orienting and lying down. The study resulted in positive findings. Exposure to the dog laughing recording resulted in the following: significantly reduced stress behaviors, increased tail wagging and the display of a play-face when playing was initiated, and more frequent pro-social behavior such as approaching and lip licking. This research suggests exposure to dog-laugh vocalizations can calm and possibly increase shelter adoptions.

**Reproduction:** In domestic dogs, sexual maturity (puberty) begins to happen around age 6 to 12 months for both males and females, although this can be delayed until up to two years old for some large breeds. Adolescence for most domestic dogs is around 12 to 15 months, beyond which they are for the most part more adult than puppy. As with other domesticated species, domestication has selectively bred for higher libido and earlier and more frequent breeding cycles in dogs, than in their wild ancestors. Dogs remain reproductively active until old age.

Most female dogs have their first estrous cycle between 6 and 12 months, although some larger breeds delay until as late as 2 years. Females experience estrous cycles biannually, during which her body prepares for pregnancy, and at the peak she will come into estrus, during which time she will be mentally and physically receptive to copulation.

Dogs bear their litters roughly 56 to 72 days after fertilization, although the length of gestation can vary. An average litter consists of about six puppies, though this number may vary widely based on the breed of dog. Toy dogs generally produce from one to four puppies in each litter, while much larger breeds may average as many as 12 pups in each litter.

**Spaying and Neutering:** Neutering (spaying females and castrating males) refers to the sterilization of animals, usually by removal of the male's testicles or the female's ovaries and uterus, in order to eliminate the ability to procreate, and reduce sex drive. Neutering has also been known to reduce aggression in male dogs, but has been shown to occasionally increase aggression in female dogs. Animal control agencies in the United States and the

ASPCA advise that dogs not intended for further breeding should be neutered so that they do not have undesired puppies.

Because of the overpopulation of dogs in some countries, puppies born to strays or as the result of accidental breedings often end up being killed in animal shelters. Neutering can also decrease the risk of hormone-driven diseases such as mammary cancer, as well as undesired hormone-driven behaviors. However, certain medical problems are more likely after neutering, such as urinary incontinence in females and prostate cancer in males. The hormonal changes involved with sterilization are likely to somewhat change the animal's personality, however, and some object to neutering as the sterilization could be carried out without the excision of organs.

It is not essential for a female dog to either experience a heat cycle or have puppies before spaying, and likewise, a male dog does not need the experience of mating before castration. Female cats and dogs are seven times more likely to develop mammary tumors if they are not spayed before their first heat cycle. The high dietary estrogen content of the average commercial pet food as well as the estrogenic activity of topical pesticides may be contributing factors in the development of mammary cancer, especially when these exogenous sources are added to those normal estrogens produced by the body. Dog food containing soybeans or soybean fractions have been found to contain phytoestrogens in levels that could have biological effects when ingested longterm. Gender-preservative surgeries such as vasectomy and tubal ligation are possible, but do not appear to be popular due to the continuation of gender-specific behaviors and disease risks.

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