

# So You Want to Breed Better Aussies

*Secrets of successful breeders*



*Knowledge from successful breeders  
compiled by Paula McDermid*

## *So you want to breed better Aussies*

That's terrific, and it's the most important first step. You want to improve the breed. Here are some important ways to help you achieve your goal.



### **LOVE THE BREED**

Desire to positively contribute to the breed.

### **TAKE TIME TO LEARN FROM A MENTOR**

Connect with an experienced breeder. That person does not necessarily need to be involved with Aussies, you can learn from someone in another breed. They have made mistakes and can help you avoid them. Your breeding program can improve much more quickly.

### **HAVE A VISION OF YOUR IDEAL DOG**

Go to shows, talk to breeders whose dogs you admire, look at many photos, study breed history, thoroughly understand the breed standard. Educate yourself by reading books. Read online resources so you know what's important in breeding better dogs.

## Ask yourself

*“What do I want to achieve with this breeding?”*



### **PRIORITIZE YOUR GOALS**

Make a list of your priorities and number them 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important. Because most of your puppies will be placed in pet homes, health and temperament should be your top priorities.

#### **#1 Health**

Long life, correct dentition, free of eye problems, free of hip or elbow dysplasia, tested for genetic diseases. Avoid parents with allergies or digestive problems. Many popular dogs produce serious hereditary diseases. You don't want to double or triple up on those dogs, no matter how beautiful they are.

#### **#2 Temperament**

Both parents should have confident personalities. Meet them in person if at all possible. They should also be intelligent, resilient, and easy to train.

*Traits to avoid:* aggressive with other dogs or people, afraid of loud noises, stubborn or too independent, hyperactive, shy, excitable.

#### **#3 Structural strength**

Look carefully at your bitch and get an opinion from an experienced breeder you trust. What ONE fault would you like to improve? Be honest with yourself, be very specific and choose only one. For example, 'I want a prettier, more correct head.' Or 'I want short, straight hocks with correct rear movement.' Or 'I want more efficient sidegait.' Choose the most important *one* that would give the puppies a good chance of improving on the bitch. Then choose a stud who has that quality and consistently produces it. He should also have excellent breed type have many other positive qualities that will complement your bitch.

*Every litter will be an enormous investment of time, money, and emotion. You want to make the best possible choice of sire and dam.*



#### **#4 Talent**

If you want to improve performance ability in your litter, follow the same steps as in #3. Performance traits can be just as difficult to achieve as conformation traits.

**If your bitch has many faults that need to be corrected, don't breed her. Get a better bitch.**

If you don't have specific goals or your goals are very general (such as I want better movement), then puppies in the litter will only accidentally meet your needs, and may not reproduce consistently toward your long-term goals.

Don't expect to fix every fault in one breeding. It takes generations to get to where you want to go. The most important thing is to KNOW where you want to go. Have a plan and stick to it.

#### **STUDY BLOODLINES**

Study the pedigrees. Research which qualities the sire and dam have consistently reproduced. Are those the qualities you want? What have the grandparents reproduced consistently?

Dig deep. If you can, see the aunts and uncles of the potential litter. They will tell you a lot about what you can expect. The more dogs you see in person, the better your information will be. Photos can tell you about breed type and provide some information about structure, but they can't tell you anything about movement or temperament. A dog can look gorgeous in a picture but be structurally and mentally unsound.

*Words of  
wisdom from  
successful breeders*



**Q: How do you make a small fortune in dogs?**

**A: Start with a large one.**

♥ "Soundness in health, mind, and structure are paramount."

♥ "Do your research *first*. Learn from people who are generous with their advice, then start with the best quality you can."

♥ "Don't worry about being an overnight sensation. Understand that as you gain knowledge you may change your vision. Find friends in other breeds and learn from them. Ribbons are great but in the end its about loving the dogs."

**Health**

"Idealists think health testing is going to create the perfect gene pool of the breed. Realists believe we do health testing for information in making our breeding choices and know that genetics has a mind of its own. Health testing is purely conjecture on what an animal will actually pass on to its offspring."

"You can study pedigrees, test for everything possible, and have all of the preferred 'not affected/non-carrier' results you could ever want, but we can't predict if, when, or where an undesirable trait will pop up. We can't test for two major heath issues in Aussies, hemangiosarcoma and epilepsy, because their inheritance is highly complex."

"Health problems in a breed are intensified by many people breeding to the same top winners."

**Temperament**

"Reserved is not shy. Reserved means the dog is confident but not necessarily eager to make friends with strangers, but the dog will accept being handled by the judge, the vet, etc. I want a dignified, sensible dog."

"Reserved means they know who their owners are. They are willing to say hello and be cheerful. But they are never confused as to who they belong to. You don't have to watch them in a crowd because they're not going to be shy or sharp. But mostly you don't have to watch them in a crowd because they are keeping their eye on you. Their priority is you and your family."

*“Attend the Nationals to learn the correct picture of the breed.”*



“A dog you have to watch because you are uncertain how he will react to people is not reserved. He is shy and/or sharp. That’s a lack of confidence. The dog should be confident, adaptable, and friendly.”

#### **Structure**

“Don’t look for a perfect dog/bitch. They don’t exist. Do the best you can, do your research, do your homework, communicate with others who have the same bloodlines. Ask questions out of genuine concern and interest for the breed.”

“Broaden your search for a stud dog outside the winner’s circle and look for a dog who produces well in the area you need.”

“Don’t allow your emotional and financial investment in your bitch prevent you from giving her an unbiased evaluation. Get an outside opinion or two before breeding.”

“The biggest key to success is based on your foundation bitch. Exceptional mothers produce exceptional mothers. A bitch who whelps easily and effortlessly, who is an outstanding mother and has a wonderful steady influence on her puppies is priceless. Make sure your bitch has a great temperament, excellent health, and who came from a superior dam.”

“To correct something on the bitch, choose a sire who is correct in that trait and not the exact opposite. For example, many people think if the bitch is small, they should breed to a very big male. That’s not the road to success. Breed to what is *correct*.”

“When looking for a stud dog, ask yourself, Would I be happy if all the puppies in the litter had his type, structure, and temperament? Focus on his virtues.”

#### **Talent**

“Pay attention to performance titles. A dog who excels in performance must have good structure to avoid injury and must have an excellent temperament. Fear and aggression are incompatible with performance.”

“Does the dog have a natural herding style, and does he want to work? Does he have drive? I want a dog that digs in when the going gets tough.”

“A dog with performance titles will tell you they have a work ethic to stick out training and trialing, especially as they move up in the levels of competition.”

*“If you want to have a successful breeding program, find and utilize a mentor.”*



“So you want to breed and show dogs? No one comes into this knowing everything and knowledge is something you will spend a lifetime gathering. If you want to have a successful breeding program, find and utilize a MENTOR (and, yes, you can have more than one). Not just any mentor, you should search for people who have been in this a LONG time, are respected in the fancy, and who have a proven history of being consistently successful over the years in your area of interest. Ask tons of questions and glean all you can from them. I have been blessed to have several mentors that have been essential in teaching, guiding, and helping me make decisions that led to where I am in my program and what my dogs have accomplished. And, no, these people were not tossed into my lap; I actively sought them out.

Go to shows and learn how to win AND lose graciously. Be kind to others. If you make mistakes in the ring, it’s ok—we all do. Apologize and move on. I’ve accidentally run up on or stacked my dog a little too close to another handler. I apologized each time and tried to learn from it and improve my skills. Volunteer at your local clubs. Trust me, they need and want all the help they can get! Build relationships and work together to make improvements in your program and the breed. Isn’t that why we are all doing this? For the love of the dog!

All these things will make you, your program, the breed and the dog fancy stronger and you will gather the necessary tools to not only help yourself, but to pass on to those in the future (who you might one day mentor) to preserve this breed we love.

I’m blessed to live in an area where most people are sincerely helpful and supportive of one another. Not all areas are like that, but *you* can choose to make a difference and set the standard no matter where you are.”