

Proposal for Breed Division & New Breed

to

American Kennel Club Board of Directors

AKC Staff Foreword

The United States Australian Shepherd Association (USASA), with guidance and input from staff, has been working for four years to determine how best to deal with the “Miniature Australian Shepherd,” a miniaturization of the Australian Shepherd. Though it was never intended by USASA or AKC, the “mini” as it is sometimes known, has become part of the USASA stud book. USASA estimates as much as 15% of its stud book consists of the Miniature Australian Shepherd and feels that going forward this percentage must be drastically reduced if its stud book is to be strictly representative of the Australian Shepherd (Preferred heights: males 20” – 23”, females 18” – 21”).

Two years ago staff concluded that the best way forward might be to separate the “mini” from the Aussie, forming a new AKC breed. At the invitation of staff, and after agreeing the conditions under which USASA could join this initiative, USASA and staff started discussions with NAMASCUSA, the oldest and largest of the Miniature Australian Shepherd parent clubs, to achieve this objective. The result is the proposal presented here by the USASA Board, drafted with guidance and input from staff, and supported by the NAMASCUSA Board. Broadly, it offers the AKC Board the following for consideration.

- 1) Acceptance of a new breed by AKC for the smaller size dogs, name as yet to be determined.
- 2) Allowance for dogs to be relocated from the current Australian Shepherd Stud Book to the new breed.

Upon approval by the AKC Board of Directors, the USASA membership will be balloted to confirm their support. It is unlikely the USASA membership will withhold support for this proposal. The NAMASCUSA membership will also be balloted to confirm their support. In the event their support is not forthcoming, AKC staff and USASA have alternative plans to achieve the aims of this proposal.

USASA Proposal - Introduction

A substantial number of Miniature Australian Shepherds have found their way into the United States Australian Shepherd Association (USASA) stud book. While these dogs are clearly members of the Australian Shepherd family, they have a separate foundation and history. Most importantly they are specifically bred to be a different size from the Australian Shepherd. For these reasons, the United States Australian Shepherd Association (USASA) proposes that these dogs be allowed to leave its stud book to form the basis of a new AKC recognized breed. Along with these dogs, USASA wishes to make provision for undersize Australian Shepherds - as designated by breeders or owners - to relocate to the new breed,

Besides the Miniature Australian Shepherds currently registered in the USASA stud book, there are a large number that have been bred true and registered outside of AKC, most notably under the aegis of the North American Miniature Australian Shepherd Club of the USA (NAMASCUSA). USASA proposes that the dogs in the NAMASCUSA registry be incorporated into the new breed, along with other dogs of the new breed from other registries, as appropriate.

Note on terminology: The USASA membership requires the eventual name of the new breed to be separate and distinct, meaning it will not reference “Australian Shepherd.” This has been agreed by the NAMASCUSA Board and AKC staff, but the new name has not yet been decided. So, this proposal will reference the proposed new breed as “MAS” in an effort to avoid confusion over names.

The specifics of the proposal are enumerated below.

USASA Proposal

1. A new AKC breed will be created, consisting of dogs from three main sources. First, there are the MAS that were inadvertently admitted into to the USASA registry. Second, there are the MAS in the NAMASCUSA registry. Third, any MAS that are deemed eligible from other registries.
2. The USASA membership is insistent that there be a clear distinction between the two breeds, without confusion over their names. Therefore, going forward, the name of the new breed cannot reference “Australian Shepherd,” directly or indirectly. A similar example of this is the Norfolk and Norwich Terrier. The basic difference between the two is the ears – nonetheless there are two distinct names for the breeds.
3. It is recommended that NAMASCUSA be the parent club for the new breed. NAMASCUSA will make its registry records available to AKC on an agreed date and as of that time the dogs listed in that registry will be eligible to be recorded as three generation dogs in the AKC Foundation Stock Service. Once the breed is set up in the AKC System, and the minimum number of dogs is enrolled, the breed will become eligible for the Miscellaneous Class at the next entrance date. Based upon enrollment figures, the breed may request to move to full recognition when eligible.
4. Dogs that are in the NAMASCUSA registry will be immediately eligible for three generation enrollment in the AKC Foundation Stock Service, which will then convert to full AKC registration. Enrollment of these dogs in the AKC Foundation Stock Service is voluntary, not compulsory.
5. The MAS will be recorded with a Herding Group designation.
6. It is requested that for a period of three years, MAS and Australian Shepherds – as designated by owners or breeders – be eligible for reclassification to the new breed within the AKC system. All dogs that make this switch do so permanently. They cannot move back. This provision is voluntary. Dogs that move from the USASA to the MAS registry will maintain titles, points, legs, etc. that have been earned in AKC competition.

Once the three year voluntary reclassification period elapses, it is proposed that the Australian Shepherd and MAS parent clubs, together with AKC staff, assess whether this voluntary reclassification has adequately achieved the objective of breed division and propose further steps, if appropriate.

7. The MAS parent club will provide assistance to AKC to determine which other registries may be valid to accept for the new breed.

8. The MAS breed standard must contain size disqualifications of 17" at the withers for bitches, and 18" for dogs. This assures a clear and firm size distinction between the MAS and the Australian Shepherd. The size distinction between the two breeds must be permanent.
9. ILP/PAL dogs will also have size limits applied. All dogs under 18" at the withers will be classified as MAS.

This includes dogs that are currently competing. This means that as of the effective date for inclusion in the Miscellaneous Class, all under 18" inch dogs, including current competitors such as *Willow* would automatically move to the new breed. Titles, points, legs, etc., earned in AKC competition would be maintained.

10. Any future litters must be of the dogs enrolled as MAS (note: new breed name is yet to be determined) within the AKC in order to be accepted.
11. The official MAS breed history must not conflict with that of the Australian Shepherd and should be agreed upon by the two breeds. (It is understood that, as with other breeds, there will be some commonality.)
12. AKC staff will work with NAMASCUSA and AKC Club Liaison to expedite licensing of affiliated MAS specialty clubs.

General Background for the Proposal

The Australian Shepherd

Historical references to "Australian Shepherd" can be found as far back as the middle of the 19th century. The dog is a confluence of various herding breeds that made their way to the farms and ranches of the American West. While the breed is indisputably American, it acquired its Australian moniker – it is thought – because there were various collie type imports from Australia, some accompanying Basque shepherds, that apparently made a significant contribution to the character and intelligence of the breed.

The Aussie's special talents as an all purpose ranch and farm dog generated increasing popularity over the decades. A breed type started to be recognizable by the beginning of the 20th Century. In the 1940's the breed achieved lasting fame as the heart of Jay Sisler's rodeo act. These dogs inspired breeders such as the Hartnagles (Las Rocosa), Steve Mansker, Joe Taylor, Walt Lamar, Fletcher Woods, Dick and Leslie Sorensen ("Colorado"), Dr. Weldon Heard ("Flintridge"), among others to begin actively setting the type for the modern "Aussie." The point in mentioning these breeders is that they are a different group from those who were instrumental in the founding of the MAS.

In 1957 the Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA) was formed and not long thereafter opened its own registry for the breed. The core of the club's membership and registry was focused on the working Aussie. In 1966, a separate Aussie club was formed with the specific intention of taking the breed into AKC. The International Australian Shepherd Association (IASA) grew rapidly, establishing its own registry, and by 1972 had registered 2,300 dogs. In addition, the club was holding specialties and National Specialties across the country. Ultimately IASA merged with ASCA, on the understanding that ASCA would work towards AKC recognition.

The first breed standard was written for ASCA in 1977. The authors of that original standard knew the breed encompassed a large number of different types and freely acknowledged the fact. So, they surveyed hundreds

of Aussies of the generally recognized type. From the data obtained, the standard committee was able to draw a picture of the breed. When it came to size, the data collected graphed as a normal bell curve, showing most male Aussies falling within a range of 20” – 23” at the withers and most female Aussies falling within a range of 18” – 21” at the withers. These ranges dictated the preferred sizes that govern all Australian Shepherd standards to this day.

After ASCA repeatedly refused to pursue AKC recognition, a group of prominent Aussie fanciers formed USASA and took the breed in to AKC, starting with the Miscellaneous Class in 1991. Full recognition followed in 1993.

There were two types of Aussie registrations accepted at the time: 1) ASCA and 2) National Stock Dog Registry (NSDR). What neither the USASA founders nor AKC appreciated was the fact that NSDR registered not only Australian Shepherds, but also MAS. Since there was no specific prohibition on NSDR “mini” registrations, these dogs began to be accepted into the USASA stud book. And that brings us to the story of the proposed new breed.

The MAS

In 1962, Ms. Sandy Travis, of Norco, CA, acquired a very small, unregistered bitch, of rough Australian Shepherd type. This bitch was bred to an unregistered Australian Shepherd and whelped her first litter in 1968. For many years Ms. Travis interbred these unregistered dogs, without any specific intent of beginning a new breed. She liked their diminutive size, coupled with their active character and intelligence, and that was reason enough. Still, these dogs are acknowledged to be the foundation of the MAS.

Between 1978 - 1980, Doris Cordova began to acquire some of Sandy Travis’ dogs, embarking on a program to specifically create the MAS. In 1980, Ms. Cordova registered Cordova's Spike with NSDR (see appendix). He is widely recognized as the first registered MAS. During this time Ms. Cordova actively sought breeders who would continue the development and registration of these dogs as MAS. Most notably among them were Charles Lasater (Valhalla) and Bill and Sally Kennedy (B/S).

The founding Mini Aussie breeders, in their endeavor to create a miniature version of the Australian Shepherd, bred the Travis dogs and their offspring to registered Australian Shepherds. The resulting dogs roughly resembled the Australian Shepherd, but were much smaller. Many breeders of the time, including Ms. Cordova, acknowledged that these early MAS lacked substance and had a widely varied breed type or “look”. So these dogs were bred to more Australian Shepherds – “outcrossed” as it is termed – to add substance and type.

By 1990, the breed had grown in numbers and popularity, enabling the formation of the club which is now NAMASCUSA. Starting in 1992, NAMASCUSA maintained a registry separate from the NSDR, initially accepting NSDR registered MAS as well as some NSDR and ASCA registered Australian Shepherds. This registration policy was very soon changed to accept only NSDR MAS dogs or the offspring of MAS and Australian Shepherd crosses.

As “outcrossing” continued, the line between MAS and Australian Shepherd blurred to the point that many breeders saw their dogs as a size variety of Australian Shepherd, rather than as a separate breed. When USASA was recognized in 1991 and AKC started accepting NSDR registrations, some MAS breeders, seeing themselves as Aussie breeders, registered their dogs with AKC, even though the USASA stud book was not intended to be open to MAS.

The MAS has grown tremendously in popularity. NAMASCUSA today has a registry that numbers nearly 4,000 dogs. Its membership totals 650 and they show their dogs around the country, including their annual National Specialty. (A complete set of club statistics appears in the appendix.) And this doesn’t count the dogs registered elsewhere – e.g. NSDR – or the fanciers who are not NAMASCUSA members.

Conclusion

The MAS clearly belongs to the Australian Shepherd family. But it does maintain a separate genetic history insofar as it descends from the Travis' first foundation dogs. Also, the MAS and the Australian Shepherd have never shared a Parent Club, nor has there been a significant overlap between the two fancies. **The size difference between the two breeds is clear and purposeful.**

As stated before, USASA estimates that from 10% to 15% of its stud book is now comprised of MAS and the descendants that were inadvertently registered as Australian Shepherds. Therefore, USASA wishes these dogs to be allowed to leave its stud book and be reclassified as a new breed. At the same time, USASA wishes other dogs in its stud book – as deemed appropriate by breeders or owners – to be eligible for reclassification to the new proposed new breed.

As part of this process, USASA believes the optimal way to do this is to bring NAMASCUSA in to the AKC fold, thus immediately enhancing the standing and size of this new breed. This assumes the NAMASCUSA membership will approve this proposal. If this does not happen, USASA and AKC staff have alternative plans for achieving the aims of this proposal.

USASA is grateful to the AKC Board for its consideration of this proposal. Since this is essentially a stud book issue, the club would like to make clear its confidence that its membership and that of NAMASCUSA will approve this proposal, if and when the AKC Board renders its own approval.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the United States Australian Shepherd Association,

Yours truly,

Stevens Parr

President

United States Australian Shepherd Association