

Miniature Australian Shepherds: What You Need to Know



The miniature Australian Shepherd is just a smaller version of the already very popular and beloved Australian Shepherd, and it makes it a very desirable breed to call your own. The miniature Australian Shepherd has a number of features that make it such a popular dog, including the fact that it is great with kids, loves affection and is not a dog that generally causes many issues in the house. Like any dog breed, though, we always recommend that you first do your research to find out if a particular breed is right for you. That's why we're providing you with the most important information regarding the miniature Australian Shepherd so you can learn what to expect, what this dog might bring to the table, and even a little bit about where he hails.

Personality and Temperament

The miniature Australian Shepherd is a fun dog. This is a dog breed that loves to play, loves to have a good time and loves to interact with the family. It is an easygoing breed with a big personality and a sweet temperament. It wants to spend a great deal of time with children, and the more active the children the better in the miniature Australian Shepherd's mind. If you have a child that is a bit rambunctious and full of life and you worry that he or she might have a bit too much energy for a dog, this is the dog breed for your child by and far. The miniature Australian Shepherd is an amazing child's dog, and he is a very loyal dog. Despite being so small, this is a

breed that is very protective, very loyal and very attentive. It's been said that the breed can anticipate what his or her people want before they are able to vocalize it, and it makes them exceptionally well-behaved dogs.

A miniature Australian Shepherd that is left unattended, alone and without any stimulation or exercise, however, is likely to turn into a problem dog. This is the kind of dog that is going to get into trouble at home because he needs human interaction and stimulation on a regular basis. They can become very nervous when they are left alone too long, and that does not bode well for anyone.

Lifestyle and Expectation

The beautiful miniature Australian Shepherd is, obviously, a much smaller version of the standard Australian Shepherd. This dog can become as tall as 18 inches or as small as 14 inches. Any smaller than that, however, and you officially have the toy version.

The miniature Australian Shepherd is a dog breed that lives around 13 years. Some, naturally, will live a bit longer and some will not live so long, but they do require some attention when it comes to their quality of life and their lifestyle. This is a dog that is not going to do too poorly if you live in an apartment or small home with no yard, but you will need to ensure that the miniature Australian Shepherd has plenty of exercise, plenty of long walks and plenty of activity to keep him busy and well exercised. He likes to have at least one very long daily walk to expend some of that ample energy that miniature Australian Shepherds are known to exhibit. Additionally, this is a dog breed that is very capable of spending hours outside playing and having a good time. That's why it's a great dog to have in a family with kids that are willing and happy to take this dog into the yard and play games, hide and seek and other activities.

This is a great dog, too, for those who haven't the time or desire to spend on grooming. The miniature Australian Shepherd has a very simple coat that is easy to brush and requires only a weekly brushing to remove dead hair and to keep it from shedding so much in your home.

Health Concerns

Miniature Australian Shepherds are very healthy breed and have no real breed-specific health issues. Be sure, however, to ask your miniature Australian Shepherd breeder about genetic testing. One of the main concerns is the MDR1 gene that can make the dog sensitive to certain medications and needs to be addressed when the dog is sick or in need of medical care. Even dogs that do not carry the MDR1 gene can exhibit sensitivity to certain medications. Talk to your vet to be sure that he/she takes the necessary precautions, which are often simply reduced dosages. See the MDR1 document below for more information.

This is not to say that the breed is not likely to become sick, become diagnosed with some other health issue or whatnot, but it's less likely with the miniature Australian Shepherd than it is with some other dog breeds.

Breed History

It was 1968 when someone decided that the regularly sized Australian Shepherd needed to be shrunk and turned into a miniature Australian Shepherd, and so a club was started and this was a breeding process that took effect. The miniature Australian Shepherd was originally bred using small dogs from the regular breed and perfected using the offspring of these dogs. It did take a while to work the way that breeders wanted, but it was as successful venture and everyone is happy with it. Over the years, the popularity of this breed has become even more prevalent, especially with the overwhelming desire so many dog owners have to have a small dog in their homes. The miniature Australian Shepherd is one of the most beautiful and most popular little dogs in the country right now, and for good reason.

Multidrug Sensitivity: What You Need to Know

BY [DR. MARTY BECKER DVM](#) | APRIL 10, 2014



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If you live with a herding breed, you probably know that your dog may be sensitive to certain parasite-control products, antibiotics, sedatives, chemotherapy drugs and pain medications. Many [Collies](#), [Australian Shepherds](#) and related breeds can suffer life-threatening illnesses or even die if given those medications. That's because they have a gene mutation that allows these [drugs](#) to build up in the brain, where they can cause neurological reactions, including tremors, disorientation and blindness.

I'm proud to say that it was researchers at my alma mater, [Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine](#), who first discovered the mutation of the multidrug resistance gene, known as MDR1, and then, in 2010, developed test procedures to identify dogs with the mutation.

What does this mean for you? It's now easy to determine whether it's safe to give your dog a particular medication without running the risk of a severe reaction. Right now, the main breeds known to be affected are herding dogs and mixes, but as more dogs are tested, it's likely that the list of affected breeds will grow. Knowing whether your dog is affected can help your veterinarian choose medications that won't cause adverse effects.

What You Need to Know

Most commonly affected breeds: [Australian Shepherds](#) (standard and miniature), [Collies](#), McNabs, [Longhaired Whippets](#) and [Silken Windhounds](#) (the latter two breeds are thought to have Shetland Sheepdog in their ancestry). Other breeds in which the mutation has been found are English Shepherds, [German Shepherd Dogs](#), [Old English Sheepdogs](#) and [Shetland Sheepdogs](#).

Drugs to avoid in dogs with the MDR1 gene mutation: The tranquilizer acepromazine; a pain medication called butorphanol; the anti-cancer drugs doxorubicin, vinblastine and vincristine; the antibiotics erythromycin and rifampin; anti-parasitic drugs such as ivermectin (in high doses), milbemycin, moxidectin and selamectin; and the anti-diarrheal drug loperamide (Imodium).

Mixed breeds can be affected: You may or may not know if your mixed breed has herding dog ancestry. Many mixed breeds who don't resemble herding dogs have been identified as having the MDR1 mutation. The WSU Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology Lab recommends that mixed breed dogs be tested for the mutation before receiving anti-mange doses of ivermectin, which are much higher than the doses used in heartworm preventive.

Heartworm preventive is safe: The medications used in monthly [heartworm preventives](#) are at levels safe enough even for dogs with the MDR1 mutation, as long as the preventives are given according to the manufacturers' recommended dose.

Horse owners, beware: If your canine assistant laps up some of your horse's paste dewormer or eats the manure of a horse who has been recently dewormed, he could temporarily or permanently lose his eyesight or even die, depending on the amount ingested.

What to Do

Ask breeders if their dogs have been cleared. Ideally, breeding dogs will have two normal copies of the gene, meaning that they are not affected and will not pass the condition on to puppies. Because the mutation is so widespread in some breeds, however, it would be impossible to eliminate all dogs with the mutation from breeding programs. Knowing a dog's status can help breeders make wise decisions and gradually reduce the incidence of the mutation in their breeds.

Test puppies. If you don't know the parents' status or if one parent is known to have the mutation, you should have your puppy tested. In a perfect world, the breeder will have already tested the puppy and will provide you with results to give to your veterinarian.

Testing can be done through your veterinarian or by mail. Test kits are available from [WSU's Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology Lab](#). You'll receive a kit and instructions on how to swab the inside of the lips to acquire a DNA sample. There's no charge to request a kit, but it costs \$70 to send in a sample for testing. (The cost drops to \$60 per sample if you send in five or more.)

Test results. Your dog will be identified as having two normal copies of the gene, a normal copy and a mutant copy, or two mutant copies. If your dog has two mutant copies of the gene, he is sensitive to the drugs listed above, and if he has one mutant copy of the gene, he *may* be sensitive to these drugs. In either case, you should notify your veterinarian.

Identify your dog. If you know that your dog has the MDR1 gene mutation, it's a good idea to add a tag to his collar noting this status. That way, a shelter or veterinarian will know to take precautions with any treatments.