

Beth: Hi everyone I had a wonderful time interviewing Jacqueline. She has the podcast called the Instinctive Australian Shepherd. We had a wonderful time discussing a little bit about what makes the Australian Shepherd a unique breed and how to determine whether or not they are one that would fit well in your home. I hope you all enjoy learning a little bit more about this wonderful breed. If you have any questions you can sure give me a call, shoot me an email, or you can contact her. Her website is <https://www.theinstinctiveaussie.com/>. And she also has the podcast if you want to learn a little more about the breed. I hope you all enjoy.

Beth: How long have you had Aussies?

Jacqueline: I have had Australian Shepherds since I was 14 so that was a while ago.

Beth: Okay.

Jacqueline: Three years ago, I met my current mentor from a 4-H class that my brother and I put on and the whole community was invited. She showed up with these, kind of, I thought they were ugly dogs when I first met them. I really didn't know anything. I had not seen one before. I though hmm those are weird looking dogs. But then she was super nice and lived on a ranch and invited me out. That got me all interested in dogs and herding dogs. That is what I do with my dogs now. They are working Aussies.

Beth: Do you have a hobby farm?

Jacqueline: I have a small ranch. My dogs primarily do chores and they work at least twice a day. That is the biggest value they have for me. I also trial a lot. You can see some of the spoils of the battle back there.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: So, I do a lot of trialing. I train other people and their dogs too.

Beth: How far do you usually have to travel for a trial?

Jacqueline: Fortunately, I live in Texas. And we have a bunch of trials here.

Beth: Okay.

Jacqueline: So, I don't have to travel a lot. But I have traveled all across the country just to experience different (Dogs barking). Sorry. Just to experience different things and people and all that.

Beth: How much maintenance does an Aussie require as far as grooming and that kind of thing?

Jacqueline: I think it depends on how particular you are about things. My dogs are working dogs, so they are out in the mud and other various things. And so, I bathe them, or they jump in the tank to clean off. It just really also depends on the blood lines. I have a female that has very minimal coat. It is probably about this long. It is very smooth and there is no undercoat. Things just kind of brush off of her.

Beth: Okay.

Jacqueline: Most of my other dogs have that thick full collar, thick hair. They require about once a week just to keep the burrs out. The undercoat will get matted in various areas if you don't manage it on a regular basis. There is a lot of hair but I kind of think that that is not bad. People don't really complain about the hair. You will see people on Facebook saying Aussies have so much hair, but I kind of think that any dog with a double coat is going to have the same amount of hair. I don't think it is any more than any other breed like a Golden Retriever or something else. So, it kind of depends on the line on how much maintenance their coat requires. I don't take mine to a groomer. I do it myself.

Really all you need is a brush of some sort. You can get those de-matting brushes. My dogs don't really like them. I think that they kind of pull on the dog's hair and they don't really like them.

Beth: Okay. Do they struggle at all with the heat down in Texas?

Jacqueline: I have a couple that are a little bit more sensitive to it than others. I have 7 working dogs right now. They come from different lines. My main dog Coper struggles with it for a few weeks until we get conditioned to it. Conditioning is part of it. If you get them outside enough and used to the heat and kind of keep your temperatures higher in the house or wherever they are kept, it helps them a lot. The conditioning is really important. I have other dogs that that don't even seem to notice it. It is kind of an individual thing too I think in that area.

Beth: Okay. Are there any health conditions someone looking into getting an Aussie should be aware of, or be asking their breeder about before bringing one home?

Jacqueline: This is a really good question to ask. And I think it is a really good topic. Finding the right breeder for any breed of dog is super important. Finding that breeder who does things with their dogs. They compete with their dog they work their dog they do something with their dog other than just breed them every time they come into heat is an indicator that that is more of a high-quality breeder in my mind usually. A breeder that can talk about the pedigrees and the dogs. I have stories for almost every dog in all my dogs' pedigrees. That is how nerdy some of us get about our dogs and we want to know the stories about where they are coming from.

As far as health things go, yes, there are genetic tests that you can do. Something like PawPrint. That is the one I prefer because they are super user friendly. Sorry my dogs are making so much noise in the background. They all decided to bark and sneeze at the same time. PawPrint is the one I use. They are a little more expensive, but they give out coupons if you sign up for their stuff. I think there are close to 20 some tests you can get for Aussies. They have a panel. You just go down to your breed and select the panel and there are all these tests you can do.

We have DM which causes in older age them to become weak in their back end. It is not a painful disease, but it causes them to have very accelerated weakness and struggle with their back end. Their rear will fall down, or they will become weak. That is kind of a big one, and a lot of us watch that very carefully.

MDR1 is something that can be in any breed of dog. That causes a sensitivity to certain drugs like Ivermectin and things like that. Now most of the time the amount of Ivermectin found in heartworm prevention is not enough to hurt even an MDR1 affected dog usually, but it helps you stay away from certain drugs.

Epilepsy is a big problem. I kind of think this is kind of all breed wise beginning to be a big problem and I am not exactly sure why. Epilepsy is growing and there is really no test for it right now. They have not identified the gene that goes along with epilepsy in dogs. So, you kind of go back to trusting the breeders, asking questions like have you had epilepsy in these dogs. And hoping that people will tell you truthfully and honestly what the issues are in their breed. That is another thing to look for in a breeder is someone who is honest about what is going on in their lines. Like hey we have this here but are taking it out here. I personally think that epilepsy is one of the most devastating diseases because watching a dog have a seizure and not having anything you can do about it is extremely painful suffering on the human as well as the dog.

I didn't cover every disease of course.

Beth: The main ones.

Jacqueline: The main ones. Then you have some eye ones. So typically, on most you get your results back, if it is a carrier it is not usually affected. Which means if it is a carrier it is probably not going to show up later on in life. Some things it can. If it is affected, it means it has two copies of the gene. It is still not a guarantee that it is going to show up. It just means it is a higher risk that it will show up.

Beth: Right

Jacqueline: Mostly responsible breeders don't breed two copies of a genetic issue.

Beth: Right

Jacqueline: It is not a big deal to have one copy because it is not a high risk.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: I personally don't mind them to have one or two things. I prefer them to be clear because it gives you more genetic diversity. You can breed to different situations if you need to, to keep something back.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: You know you don't want to with what I do, I have dogs who have instinct and they work. I have to balance the throwing the baby out with the bathwater kind of thing with what we are looking for. Does that kind of answer your question?

9:14

Beth: Yeah. How hard are they to train, to house train and to teach them to do the work you use them for?

Jacqueline: I think they are really easy to train. That is one of the things that attracted me to them. I think they are close to a border collie level of being able to train fast. Potty training for most of my dogs was a couple of days. And then they are trustworthy after a few months. It is not fair to any little baby puppy to expect them to be fully potty trained before a couple of months that you have them. Within a week or so or less most of mine are going on schedule and are only making messes if it is your fault. They are really easy to teach tricks. I think they are really easy dogs to train.

10:03

Beth: At what point do you start working them with livestock? At what age do you start that kind of training?

Jacqueline: Training starts around a year because you need to wait just like with agility and a lot of other sports. You need to wait for all the bones to finish growing and all the growth plates to stop. You don't want any damage because it is very athletic activity and they are moving a lot. They also have to have their mind ready to take the pressure of training. All training exerts some sort of pressure, at least what we do. They have to be able to take correction, take direction and be mentally mature enough to train. Usually around a year. I will take them and test them. It is mostly for my curiosity than for actual dog training to see if they are interested in stock a couple times during that first year to see if they have any interest.

Beth: Okay. Do you usually start them out on ducks or sheep or whatever you are?

Jacqueline: Sheep or goats. Ducks are actually, contrary to what you think, they are very... most people think they would be easy. They are actually the hardest livestock to work because the dogs have to be super precise and listen and make small movements. When they are young, they are usually running a lot. Ducks are very hard. I don't usually put a dog on ducks until they are pretty advanced. It is usually sheep and goats, really tame sheep dog broke sheep. That means they don't run around. They stick around by me. That keeps everything calm.

11:34

Beth: Okay. How much time, would somebody looking at getting an Aussie, should they expect to spend training and exercise to keep them happy

Jacqueline: I am glad you asked this question because it is a really big myth out there. You see in all these groups that people say, 'oh you have to exercise them 10 hours a day, and they have to be constantly stimulated.' I think that is a false impression of any dog. If you constantly stimulate and constantly exercise, you are keeping them in that high adrenalin state, and you are actually causing more of a neurotic dog.

The exercise needs to be mental and physical. It doesn't always have to be long periods of time. You want to keep that dog in a low adrenaline state with long walks if you can. They will go with you all day if you let them. If you want to exercise and run or trail rides, they will go all day until they drop usually, but you don't really want to do that. I don't think it is completely necessary. I think it is the mental stimulation, like doing an activity like I do with my young dogs before they are old enough to be on stock. Obedience, tricks, tracking, teaching them how to find things, doing nose work, are really good activities that stimulate the dog and wear them out.

You also need to teach them how to be calm. There is an activity called 'sit on the dog' where you have the dog sitting or laying next to you and you sit on the leash. They learn to stay and be calm next to you for however long. You start out small increments of time and then you get bigger and bigger.

You just don't want to get to the point where you are creating a dog, creating a monster where you are just exercising with no purpose and no intention other than to keep them moving if that makes sense.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: I will have 6 or 7 dogs just laying around the house. If I am in the house, they are all chill. If I go outside, they are all ready to go. There is no real number, but the exercise does not have to be constant. I think you have to balance the exercise with the teaching them to be calm. They are very happy just laying outside as they are running outside too.

13:45

Beth: Okay. You said you have a number of them. Do they generally get along well with other dogs if they are introduced to an adult dog? Or is it better if you introduce them to another puppy? Or bring them in as a young dog?

Jacqueline: Aussies are breedists. They prefer Aussies. If you take them out somewhere and there is another Aussie that is where they are going to go. They prefer their own breed. It is kind of funny and people always notice it when they have multiple dogs. I think if you are talking about introducing them in a park or another setting where there are different dogs that other people have, you need to teach your dog to just ignore those dogs. When you allow your dog to run up on other dogs you are just waiting for a problem to occur. I teach mine to leave the other dogs alone and if the other person and other dog want to make a sniff or talk to each other, you have to get permission and the dog has to approach when you tell him, that kind of thing. I think that most dogs raised properly and raised where they have boundaries and structure, behave that way.

As far as introducing them into the house... I prefer.. or into a new pack, say you have a new puppy, or a new dog come into the house, it is easier with puppies. Aussies are really good with babies and they are really good with younger dogs. I think many breeds are like this, but the puppies would be easiest. I usually try to keep a balance of males and females. If I had just two dogs it would be one male and one female. They don't fight usually typically, unless they are littermates. Littermates will fight it does not matter... if they have that personality and you allow them to act that way.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: I encourage people not to get two dogs at the same time.

Beth: Yes, definitely not a good option.

Jacqueline: Train it up teach it some manners. Then when you get your next one maybe a year or two later the dog you have will be able to help you train the other dog. But, getting two at the same time... like I said littermates will often times fight at a younger age and more vicious than non-littermates. And then you know the female thing. I think females if they have that personality that is going to cause that problem, they are going to have more trouble letting things go than boy dogs do. Not all of them fight. Some of them it depends on the line and the dog you know. You can have some success no matter what you do. These are just some general rules for how I do it because it seems to have worked better over the years.

16:05

Beth: Do you think that an Aussie would be a good first dog for someone who has never owned a dog before?

Jacqueline: I think they are great dogs for anybody; however, Aussies are smart and easy as long ... most Aussie people fall in love with cute little adorable puppies or the dogs that are 3, 4, 5 years old and have learned how things go. They are well trained. They are smart. They are easy dogs to get along with. Those are the Aussies that people fall in love with. Well it takes a path to get there.

There is this popular meme out there where it shows this cute little fuzzy Aussie, because there is not really a puppy that is cuter than an Aussie. They are just so adorable. Then it shows a picture of a velociraptor.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: Then it shows a picture of a full-grown Aussie adult. Many people have seen that. An that is the truest meme I have ever known about dogs before. The age after 6 months old... they have a personality that some of them, not all of them. A gain some breeders are breeding for more calm easy going dogs. Those of us that have the high drive original Aussies, you know there is that period from about 6 months to about 2 to 3 years old depending on the personality of the dog where they are difficult. They are not bad. They are just pushy and they need boundaries. They need constant remember hey you are the dog kind of thing, you know.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: And that... So if you are a first time dog owner and can understand and treat them like a dog with respect but they are dogs... which is hard because they are really smart and they kind of act like people sometimes because they are just so observant and they can get in your head, but they are still a dog. If you can treat them that way, kindly teach the boundaries, say hey these are the rules and constantly be reinforcing them, on the other side you can't get a better dog I think you know. If you are a person who can handle that kind of structure and you understand that this is going to be a road, then yes, a beginner could handle them but if you are kind of like, I just want a puppy or a dog to love me, then it probably would be a difficult situation. You might have one that has got some problems.

Beth: Okay. How to they handle strangers, people they don't know coming over or seeing them in public?

Jacqueline: So there is a big variety in breeders. This is not a very old breed. This breed has only been around or registered for 65 years or so. It is not an old breed. Back in the day they were valued for their protective abilities. People would take them to the rodeo and they would guard the saddles and the gear while the person was out competing at the rodeo. That is where they really grew up in popularity. A lot of old timers who have had Aussies for a long time will say they got their first Aussie at a rodeo. So one of the more popular people Jay Sisler, he used to train Aussies back in the 30's and they would do tricks and he was on TV and all that. He would say, 'Here's the trick.' Then he would put \$100 bill in the back of the pickup truck and put the Aussie in the back of the pickup truck. Then he said 'If you can get the \$100 bill it is yours.' Nobody ever got the \$100 bill because the Aussies are very protective. They were valued for that back then.

So now we have some people who are breeding Aussies who are super cool, chill, golden retriever style personalities where they have never met a stranger. But the original lines and typically more the working lines you have a protective dog. My dogs will scare you to death if you come near my truck or

my house, but if I take them out of the truck, they will be like hey you are my best friend. But they are very protective of their property.

Beth: Okay

Jacqueline: And that is normal. You kind of have to evaluate the personalities of that dog. Take them out a lot when they are young. Get them out. I don't like the word socialize because it is not just la de da de da. Train them with people. Take them to the pet store. Let them meet people. That will help a lot.

Then when they are 9 or 10 months old maybe 15 months old, that kind of teenagery age, they will often times start back and people will say, 'my dog has never barked at anybody.' Well, they are going through a developmental stage right now, you need to keep training them and keep getting them to learn that people are fine. You are only allowed to be protective in these situations.

Beth: Yep

Jacqueline: That is pretty typical.

20:16

Beth: You mentioned that you do the stock work with your dogs. Do you do any other kind of competitions with them?

Jacqueline: I have done a little bit of rally and I have done tracking. I really enjoy tracking. I like the sports where the dog is... you know I can't sniff and tell where he is. The he is in charge of the situation. And with stock I can't run around and chase the cow like he does so I like those kind of competitions.

Beth: What is your favorite thing about Aussies? What do you love most about the breed?

Jacqueline: The partnership. They love to team up with people and that look they give you like they adore you. And they can almost read your mind because they are so observant and they are so in tune to people. It's like their whole reason for existing is to make you happy. I just love that about them. And the loyalty. They don't run away. They are just super loyal. That is what I love most about them.

Beth: Okay. What do you think the most is the frustrating thing about the breed.

Jacqueline: They have a mind of their own. They love you and everything. But I train my dogs to be super independent. My dogs may have to gather cattle out of sight where I cannot see them. They have to make their own decisions, so I let them think a lot. Sometimes when they get older they think they know the rules themselves and they want to be independent and kind of do their own thing. That can be frustrating. The pushiness of them. They often times have a very big personality. I think these are a type A personality dog

Beth: Okay

Jacqueline: I am a type A person. That is why we get along. So they can be really pushy. I think that is the most frustrating part.

22:12

Beth: Okay. Is there anything else you think that people should know about before getting an Aussie or before thinking that it might be a good breed for them?

Jacqueline: I kind of talked about some of the draw backs of their personalities. I think those are the things that I talked about before. Making sure you get a good breeder. Understanding the time commitment of any puppy. And that these guys do have energy. They do require you to pay attention to them and watch them and manage them for a good year and a half to three years. It is not going to be 6months 9months oh you're and adult and everything is cool. That is not who they are typically. I think that is what they should be watching for.

23:00

Beth: How would someone go about finding a good breeder?

Jacqueline: That is a good question too. If you are looking for a working dog that works stock, there's a website. I own it. I'll say that, but it is really the only one out there. It is workingaussiesource.com. We have vetted working breeders. You can get working Aussies to be a good pet or to be a good sport dog, like if you are going to do agility or tracking or nose work or whatever. I would recommend going to a working breeder because those are the style of dogs I like.

But if you can't find any of those, ask on the Australian Shepherd Club of America. It is the original parent club. They have breed referrals there. Go to a dog show. Like if you are thinking hey I want a show dog or a conformation dog, that is totally different than a working dog. Or if I want an obedience dog, go to one of those shows, a dog show, go to one of those and watch the dogs and see the ones you really like. Interact with the ones you like. Call different breeders that are actually doing things with their dogs. Talk to the breeders that are doing the things that you want them to do. And then if you say, 'hey I just want a pet.' A lot of us breed dogs and not every puppy in the litter is going to be a competition dog. Many of them go onto pet homes and they make great dogs.

Then ask them questions about the pedigree. If they can't tell you about the dogs in the first 5 generations of the pedigree, they don't know much about what they are breeding. Those are some tips.

Beth: Awesome. I have learned stuff. I grew up with an Aussie so I know a little bit about the breed just from him. It's been fun to hear the working side, because he was a show dog. We did conformation with him. He didn't ever work anything

Jacqueline: That is fine. There is nothing wrong with that. Everybody wants different things and it is a breed that can give you all those things.

Beth: Yeah he was definitely a fun dog.

Jacqueline: Yeah they are fun dogs.

Beth: Thank you very much. Is there anything I didn't cover that you think people should know about the breed?

Jacqueline: Well if I can plug my pod cast, that

Beth: Oh yeah.

Jacqueline: There is a lot of information. It is called The Instinctive Australian Shepherd. You can find it anywhere you can get a podcast. It talks about the history of the breed and we talk a lot of working stuff herding stock dog stuff. We also do some other things for pet owners we talk about behaviors and stuff like that.

Beth: Awesome.

Jacqueline: That would be cool.

Beth: I will put a link to that in the bottom of this interview. So people can find you.

Jacqueline: Yeah, that would be cool

Beth: Is there any other way people could reach out to you if they have questions or... you said you breed correct?

Jacqueline: Not very often

Beth: Not very often

Jacqueline: Every now and then I do. I am not a big breeder. I have a website called stockdogtrainer.com. That is how you would reach me personally if you are interested in herding stuff or whatever.

Beth: Okay. I will include that incase that is something people want to know more information about.

Jacqueline: Well, cool. Good luck with your project.

Beth: Yeah, thank you very much. I sure appreciate your time and your knowledge and being willing to share it with me so we can help people get breeds that fit their lifestyles.

Jacqueline: Yes their lifestyle that is great. It is a good project. You are very welcome, thanks for inviting me.

Beth: Have a good day.

Jacqueline: You too bye.