

## Welcoming a New Four-Legged Champion in the Ring

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### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- In 2024, the AKC is welcoming its 201st breed, the Lancashire Heeler
- This furry little ball of energy is the newest member of the Herding Group, and based on his appearance, is often confused for a small Doberman Pinscher, a Manchester Terrier mix, or some kind of Corgi
- The Lancashire Heeler is described as “smart, fast, sweet, loving, clever, mischievous, intelligent, energetic, loyal, attached, versatile, tenacious, robust, affectionate, and alert”

As of the first day of 2024, the Lancashire Heeler was officially recognized as the American Kennel Club’s (AKC) 201st recognized breed, and newest member of the Herding Group.<sup>1</sup> These furry little dynamos are also now eligible to compete in AKC events.

### The Road to Recognition by the AKC

The Lancashire Heeler breed earned full recognition from The Kennel Club in the U.K. in 1981. The road to becoming an officially recognized breed in the U.S. began with entrance into the AKC Foundation Stock Service (FSS) in 2001, which allowed development of “secure reliable record-keeping through the AKC.” At this stage, the breed wasn’t yet eligible for AKC registration, but could compete in companion events.

In 2017, the U.S. Lancashire Heeler Club (USLHC), formed in 2007, began the process to have the breed join the AKC’s Miscellaneous Class, which allows Conformation Competition in that class. The final step — being officially recognized as a member of the Herding Group — required proof of a minimum of 20 litters bred with a three-generation pedigree, which ensures the breed is established and sustainable.

The recognition journey also included an approved standard, proof of registrations, and participation in Conformation, Agility, Obedience, AKC Rally, and Barn Hunt events, along with judging seminars and competition in three Open shows for Miscellaneous and FSS breeds. In addition, 10 dogs owned by parent club members had to earn Certificate of Merit (CM) titles. This was accomplished by April 2023.

According to Sheryl Bradbury, President of the USLHC, there are currently about 400 Lancashire Heelers across the country.

## Spreading the Word

Because the Lancashire Heeler is just being introduced in the U.S., USLHC member-breeders are accustomed to answering lots of questions about them, even at dog shows, where the most common query is, “What breed is that?” It will be up to owners and breeders to educate not only the general public, but other club members and judges as well.

This will be especially important with regard Conformation and temperament because the standard can be somewhat vague, and judges can interpret it differently. The breed’s appearance also tends to cause confusion, with people mistaking the dogs for mixed breeds, “mini” Doberman Pinschers, Manchester Terrier mixes, and some variation of a Corgi.

Another important point USLHC member-breeders plan to stress is that despite the “Heeler” nickname several other dogs carry (e.g., Red Heeler, Blue Heeler, Queensland Heeler), the Lancashire Heeler is the only AKC breed with “Heeler” in its official breed name.

## Dynamite in a Small Package

Despite his small size, the Lancashire Heeler is a sturdy little dog who appreciates being active and challenged. In terms of competitive events, they’re involved in Herding, Agility, Obedience, Rally, Fast CAT, Barn Hunt, Dock Diving, Disc Dog, Tracking, and Therapy, and believe it or not, even Earth Dog and weight-pull events. Here's Dora demonstrating her agility skills:

*“It’s a breed that will work hard all day and is happy to curl up at your side and watch the TV news at night,” says Bradbury.*

As a herding breed, the Lancashire Heeler is extremely intelligent and needs a job to do. Despite her small size, she won’t be fulfilled as a full-time lap dog. These dogs are very loyal, and while they’ll love everyone in the family, they tend to bond with one person only. They’re good with children as long as the kiddos are respectful of them. Here's Ben doing tricks his young human taught him:

## Additional Details About the Breed

The breed standard for coat colors is black and tan, or liver and tan. The dogs’ coats are dense and waterproof, require minimal grooming (e.g., a light brushing and occasional bathing), and do shed. Their height is 10 to 12 inches, their weight ranges from 9 to 17 pounds, and their lifespan is 12 to 15 years.

In terms of personality and temperament, the Lancashire Heeler ranks high in affection, friendliness — including toward other pets and kids, need for exercise, playfulness, energy level, trainability, intelligence, and tendency to bark.

These dogs need at least an hour per day of vigorous exercise, including brisk walks, jogging, hiking, and challenging games of fetch. Since they also often excel at dog sports, you might also want to look into some of the AKC events mentioned above.

The Lancashire Heeler is a generally healthy and long-lived breed. Two hereditary health issues to watch for include primary lens luxation, and Collie eye anomaly.

## **Sources and References**

[The Spruce Pets, March 30, 2022](#)

<sup>1</sup> [AKC.org, January 4, 2024](#)

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