

## **Executive Summary**

The Swedish Vallhund Society undertook an online Health Survey with the aim to establish more accurate health statistics for the breed in the UK; to find what conditions are prevalent in the population and how severe they are, as data of this type in the UK is lacking. Results were collected across both pet owners and breeders from within and outside the club to gain a wider cross section of the breed. Information was collected on a total of 45 dogs currently living within the UK, with owners reporting health problems in 10 dogs (22.22% of surveyed dogs). A total of 16 different health problems were reported in these 10 dogs with the most common being Anal Gland problems (3 Dogs) followed evenly by Retinopathy, Cruciate Ligament Disease or Injury, Allergies, Dental disease and Missing Teeth (2 dogs each). The Swedish Vallhund breed is often thought to be a hardy and healthy breed, with owners reporting 35 dogs as having no health problems (77.78% of surveyed dogs) this lends some credit to this claim although more research into this area is needed to gain a better insight.

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# **Swedish Vallhund Society**

## **Health Survey Results Report**

### **Introduction**

The Swedish Vallhund Society decided to undertake a Health Survey to assess the breeds current health status as data of this type in the UK is lacking. The Kennel Club conducted a health survey in 2014 however information on only 18 living dogs was submitted. The Finnish Kennel Club has been collecting data on specific health testing results since 1988 to the current date, including Hip and Elbow Scores, Heart Testing, Eye Testing, Knee Scores and Spondylosis. While this provides a lot of important information on these health problems this does not include any other types of problems that could be found in canines, something which the Society wish to monitor so we can spot potential new problems before they become wide spread.

### **Methodology**

It was decided to use an online survey due to its ease of use, people could fill it out in minutes and it could be emailed, uploaded to the clubs website and shared on social media. Using an online survey verses a paper one also had the benefit of not costing the society any funding as the survey site used [kwiksurveys.com](http://kwiksurveys.com) is free to use for all, and there is no postage costs. This also means there is no risk of surveys getting lost in the post.

The designing of the survey itself was kept simple and to the point as long or complicated surveys run the risk of not being completed. It was decided unlike the longevity survey this one should be one survey per dog due to the amount of questions to save space. While this meant owners would need to fill in

multiple surveys if they owned more than one dog it was felt to be the best option. Once this was decided we needed to create the questions ensuring a multitude of common canine health problems were covered while having an option for owners to include less common ones. We did this by splitting them into sections, these were Skeletal and Muscular, Cardiovascular and Circulatory, Nervous system/ Endocrine, Eye Problems, Skin/Ears/Nose , Gastrointestinal / Liver / Lung / Pancreas , Urinary and Reproductive system, Miscellaneous Health Problems . Each section listed a number of common health problems found in canines as well as a box labelled 'Other' for owners to type in a condition not on the list. This prevented confusion by breaking up the long list of potential health problems and aided in correlating the results.

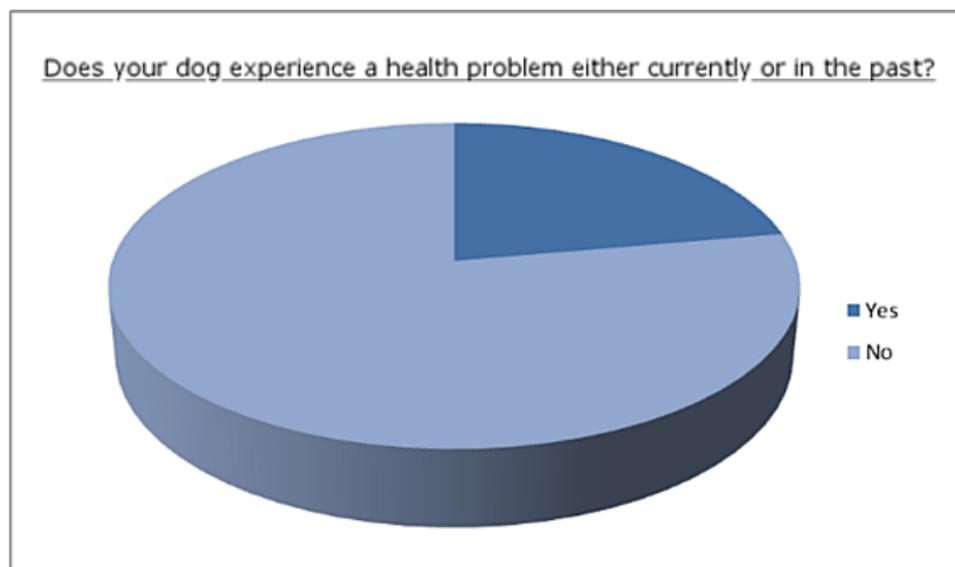
It was decided it was best to allow people to remain anonymous when filling in the survey as this would encourage people to be honest and open when filling it in as often some owners can be unwilling to discuss health problems in their dogs. Once constructed a link to the survey was uploaded to the clubs website with members being informed of this as well as to social media via two Facebook groups: Swedish Vallhund Enthusiasts and UK Swedish Vallhunds. This allowed the survey to reach not only club members but all owners active online, as well as ones outside of those places as people could share and email a link to the survey.

The Survey went live on April 17th and data was collected on September 17th. The data was entered into a spreadsheet program creating a table for each of the sections named above. Using the data collected the percentage of dogs experiencing a health problem was created and which problems those were recorded. Charts were also made to help display the data.

## Results

### Percentage of dogs that have experienced a health problem.

Information was collected on a total of 45 dogs living in the UK, out of this 35 dogs have not experienced any health problems while 10 dogs have. This means 77.78% of surveyed dogs were healthy while 22.22% of surveyed dogs have or had a health problem. There were a total of 16 different health problems reported with 22 cases, this means that some dogs had more than one health problem.



### Skeletal and Muscular Problems

6 cases of problem were reported in this section making up 11.11% of all the dogs surveyed. These include; osteoarthritis, congenital vertebral anomalies, cruciate ligament disease or injury, soft pallet and leg injury/ankle damage.

### Nervous system/ Endocrine Problems

1 case was reported of Epilepsy, accounting for 2.22% of the total dogs surveyed.

### Gastrointestinal / Liver / Lung / Pancreas Problems

1 case of Pancreatitis was reported in this section, accounting for 2.22% of the total dogs surveyed.

### Eye Problems

3 cases of health problems were reported in this section, accounting for 6.67% of the total dogs surveyed. These included; retinopathy and cataracts.

### Skin/Ears/Nose Problems

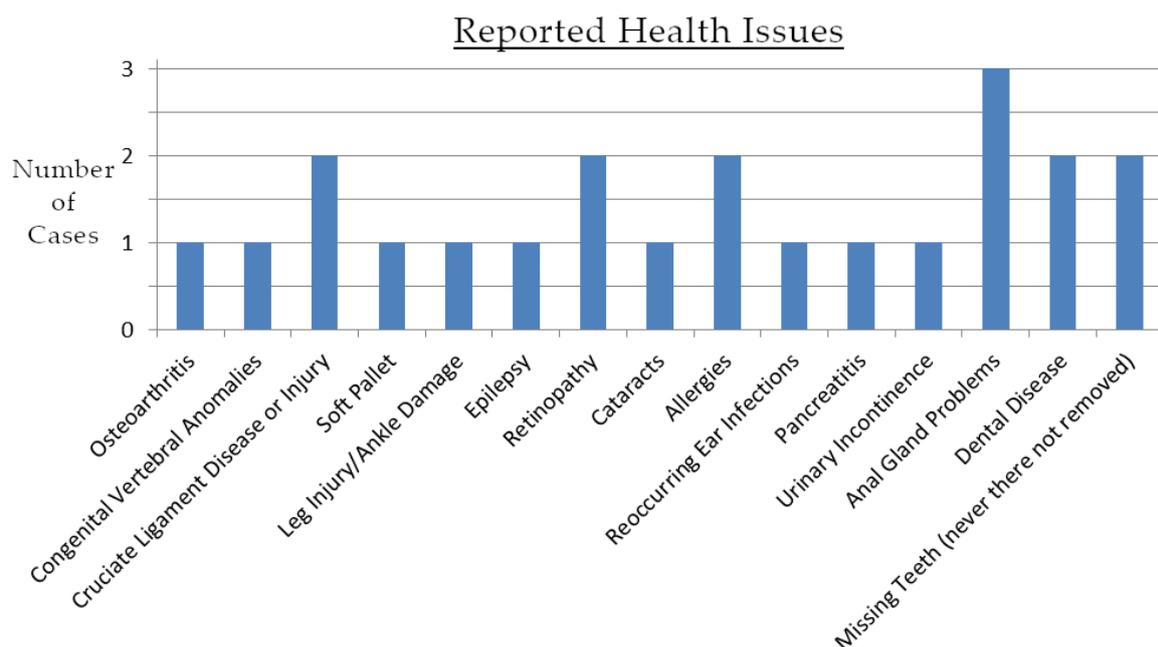
3 cases of health problems were reported in this section, accounting for 6.67% of the total dogs surveyed, including; allergies and reoccurring ear infections.

### Urinary and Reproductive system Problems

1 cases of Urinary incontinence was reported in this section, accounting for 2.22% of the total dogs surveyed.

### Miscellaneous Health Problems

7 cases of health problems were reported in this section, accounting for 15.55% of the total dogs surveyed. These included; anal gland problems, dental disease and missing teeth.



## **Discussion and conclusions**

The vast majority of the surveyed population was reported as healthy, this lends credit to the idea that the Vallhund is a hardy and healthy breed. Of the minority of dogs that was reported as having experienced a health problem the most common problem was with anal glands. Anal gland issues are more common on smaller dogs and can have a variety of causes from diet, excess weight, allergies, period of soft stools, damage, infections as well as physical issues like narrow ducts.

According to the Kennel Clubs 2014 Health survey the most commonly reported disease conditions in descending order were: Hypersensitivity (allergic) skin disorder, Otitis media, Aural (ear) haematoma, Hepatic (liver) tumour/cancer, Mammary cancer/tumour, Pyometra and Retinopathy. These results do not completely match the Society's health survey results, this is likely do to the very small survey size of the Kennel Clubs health survey which was based on 18 live dogs. Whereas the Swedish Vallhund Society's survey was based on 45 live dogs. However some of the health problems on the kennel clubs results were not reported on our survey meaning some of those 18 dogs were not included in this survey. Between 2006 and 2016 a total of 351 vallhunds were registered with the Kennel Club, assuming an average mean age of 13 years most of these dogs should still be alive. This means this survey covers only 12.82% of the population. More of the population needs to be surveyed for the results to be a fully accurate reflection of the whole populations breed health status.

The survey was a success and completed its objective. The health of the breed should be continued to be monitored each year as more data is needed to cover the whole population of Vallhunds in the UK. To meet this future aim it

has been decided the survey will be repeated yearly. As this survey was anonymous continuing it in the current format would make it impossible to prevent the same information for the same dog being imputed multiple times, this would lead to the results becoming inaccurate. To prevent this all future health surveys should instead have a way to identify the dogs.

## Appendices

# SVS Breed Health Survey 2017

Create your own  
FREE ONLINE SURVEY

This survey is open to all Swedish Vallhund owners (not just Society members) living in the UK. Please submit your dog's results, even if they have never had a health issue.

The aim of this survey is to ascertain what population of the breed in the UK suffer or have suffered with a health problem, and how common those problems are within the breed.

Please fill in one survey for each dog you currently own. If you own multiple dogs, please complete it multiple times. Your personal details will not be recorded and you will remain anonymous.

We would like to thank all UK owners who participate in this survey.

### 1\* Does your dog experience a health problem either currently or in the past?

A Yes (Please tick the problem(s) in the below lists)	B No (Please submit the survey)
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### 2 Skeletal and Muscular Problems

A Osteoarthritis	B Hip dysplasia	C Elbow dysplasia
D Luxating patella	E Congenital vertebral anomalies	F Spondylitis
G Cruciate Ligament Disease or Injury	H Panosteitis	I Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD)
J Hypertrophic osteodystrophy (HOD)	K Myasthenia gravis	L Muscular Atrophy
M Muscular Dystrophy	N Bone Cancer/Tumor	
Other (Please Specify)		

### 3 Cardiovascular and Circulatory Problems

A Von Willebrand Disease	B Subvalvular Aortic stenosis	C Aortic Stenosis
D Dilated cardiomyopathy	E Haemophilia	F Pulmonic Stenosis
G Degenerative Mitral Valve Disease	H Heart Failure	I Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA)
J Pulmonary Hypertension	K Arrhythmias	L Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM)
M Pulmonic stenosis	N Heart Murmur	O
Other (Please Specify)		

### 4 Nervous system/ Endocrine Problems

A Syringomyelia	B Epilepsy	C Canine cognitive dysfunction
D Thyroiditis	E Cerebellar hypoplasia	F Intervertebral Disc (Ruptured Disc)
G Diabetes	H Hypothyroidism	I Hyperparathyroidism
J Cushing's syndrome	K Addison's Disease	L Hypoglycaemia
M Brain Cancer/Tumor	N Lymphoma	O Leukemia
Other (Please Specify)		

## 5 Eye Problems

A	Ectropion (eyelid folding outward)	B	Entropion (eyelid folding inward)	C	Distichia (including ectopic cilia)
D	Trichiasis	E	Cataracts	F	Progressive retinal atrophy
G	Retinopathy	H	Corneal dystrophy	I	Collie eye anomaly (CEA)
J	Cherry eye	K	Glaucoma	L	Keratoconjunctivitis sicca (dry eye)
M	Lagophthalmos	N	Retinal Dysplasia	O	Primary lens luxation
P	Eye Cancer/Tumor				
Other (Please Specify)					

## 6 Skin/Ears/Nose Problems

A	Deafness	B	Reoccurring ear infections	C	Nasal Cancer/Tumor
D	Allergies	E	Follicular dysplasia	F	Dermoid sinus
G	Juvenile cellulitis	H	Skin Cancer/Tumor	I	Benign Skin Tumor
Other (Please Specify)					

## 7 Gastrointestinal / Liver / Lung / Pancreas Problems

A	Gastric dilatation volvulus (Bloat)	B	Stomach Cancer/tumor	C	Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency
D	Pancreatitis	E	Pancreatic cancer/tumor	F	Inflammatory bowel disease
G	Portosystemic shunt (Liver Shunt)	H	Liver Failure	I	Lung Cancer/Tumors
J	Liver Cancer/Tumor				
Other (Please Specify)					

## 8 Urinary and Reproductive system Problems

A	Renal failure	B	Bladder stones	C	Urinary incontinence
D	Bladder Cancer/Tumors	E	Ovarian cysts	F	Ovarian Cancer/Tumor
G	Uterine Prolapse	H	Uterine Cancer/Tumor	I	Mammary Gland Tumors
J	Veneral Granulomas	K	Cryptorchid/ Monorchid	L	Testicular Cancer/Tumor
M	Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (enlargement)	N	Prostate Cancer/Tumor	O	Phimosis
Other (Please Specify)					

## 9 Miscellaneous Health Problems

A	Anal gland problems	B	Dental disease	C	Missing Teeth (never there not removed)
D	Vaccine reactions	E	Umbilical hernia	F	Inguinal hernia
G	Laryngeal Paralysis	H	Tracheal Collapse	I	Megasophagus
Other (Please Specify)					

[Finish Survey](#)



## Swedish Vallhund

### Pedigree Breed Health Survey

Forms were received representing 18 living dogs & 4 deceased dogs.

#### Mortality results

A total of 4 deaths were reported, representing 0.07% of all deaths reported in the Pedigree Breed Health survey. The range of longevity for the Swedish Vallhund was 9 years to 17 years. Table 1 shows the causes of death for the breed.

**Table 1** The most common causes of death/reasons for euthanasia (N = 4 deceased dogs).

Cause of death
Cancer - unspecified
Neurological condition - unspecified
Old Age

#### Morbidity results

The 18 live Swedish Vallhunds represented 0.03% of total dogs in the survey. The median age of live dogs for the breed was 5.5 years (Table 2). Of the 18 Swedish Vallhunds which the survey covers, 12 had reported no conditions and 6 reported affected by at least one condition (min = 1 condition(s), max = 3 conditions), giving a total of 9 incidents of conditions.

The gender, neuter status and age of neutering summary statistics for Swedish Vallhunds are shown in Table 3. There were 14 dogs with responses for Body Condition displayed in Table 4.

The median age the dogs were first affected by a condition was 3 years (min = 0 years, max = 13 years). Table 5 shows the disease conditions for the Swedish Vallhund.

**Table 2:** The summary statics for the dogs' current age when survey was completed

Number of Dogs	Mean age (years)	Median age (years)	Min age (years)	Max age (years)
18	5.61	5.5	0	14

**Table 3:** Gender, neuter status and age summary statistics for dogs where gender and neuter status was reported

Sex	Neuter status	Age known	Count	Mean age neutered (years)	Median age neutered (years)	Min age neutered (years)	Max age neutered (years)
Female	Neutered	Yes	2	4.5	4.5	2	7
Female	Not neutered	No	4	NA	NA	NA	NA
Male	Neutered	Yes	5	1.4	2	0	2
Male	Not neutered	No	7	NA	NA	NA	NA

**Table 4:** The body condition comment and the age of the dog when this comment was made

Body condition	Count	Mean age (years)	Median age (years)	Min age (years)	Max age (years)
No comment was made by vet	2	4.00	4	0	8
Normal	10	4.70	2.5	0	14
Somewhat overweight	2	7.50	7.5	6	9

**Table 5:** The most commonly reported disease conditions in descending order for the breed (N = 18 live dogs)

Condition
Hypersensitivity (allergic) skin disorder
Otitis media
Aural (ear) haematoma
Hepatic (liver) tumour/cancer
Mammary cancer/tumour
Pyometra
Retinopathy

#### Summary

From the dogs surveyed most Swedish Vallhunds were not affected by a disease condition (66.67%). There were two disease conditions that represented an equal proportion of affected live dogs; these conditions were hypersensitivity (allergic) skin disorder and otitis media. The most commonly reported cause of death was cancer (unspecified).