

# **The SVS 2025 Health Report**

## **Executive Summary**

This report presents the findings from the 2025 Swedish Vallhund Society Health Survey, conducted by the breed club to monitor the health status of the breed within the UK. The primary goal was to assess the current health landscape of Swedish Vallhunds and compare the results to the previous survey the club carried out in 2018. In addition to collecting data on health conditions, this year's survey was expanded to include new sections on individual dog characteristics, lifestyle, and behaviour. This broader scope aimed to identify any possible patterns, risk factors, or lifestyle links associated with specific health issues.

The survey was conducted anonymously and received 103 responses, a significant increase from the 45 responses in 2018. Data was gathered through an online form, promoted via the breed club's website, social media channels, and shared among members and puppy owners. While options such as submitting microchip numbers or Kennel Club names were considered to support future health tracking, these were ultimately excluded to maintain accessibility and encourage participation.

Overall, 30.1% of owners reported that their dog had at least one diagnosed health condition. The most commonly reported issues were allergies (10 cases), arthritis (8 cases), retinopathy (5 cases), seizures (5 cases), and anal gland problems (5 cases). These findings provide valuable insight into the most prevalent concerns currently affecting the breed.

Monitoring breed health is particularly important for the Swedish Vallhund Society, as we are a minority breed with a smaller gene pool. Without ongoing observation, health issues have the potential to spread more easily throughout the population. The survey also provides insight into the effectiveness of current health initiatives, such as hip scoring, eye testing, and DNA testing, and supports breeders in making informed decisions to protect and improve the long-term health of the breed.

Additionally, just under half of the responders would be interested in a scheme for patella grading.

## **Introduction**

The 2025 Swedish Vallhund Health Survey was designed to provide an updated overview of the breed's health status in the UK and to help the breed club track changes or trends since the last survey conducted in 2018. Given the breed's small population and limited genetic diversity, regular health monitoring is critical to ensure any emerging issues are identified early and to inform responsible breeding decisions.

With 103 completed responses, more than double the number from the 2018 survey, the results provide a stronger dataset for analysis. This report summarises the key findings and their implications for the breed's future health and welfare.

Compared to previous surveys, this year's version included more comprehensive sections addressing lifestyle, behaviour, and general characteristics. This expansion aimed to explore whether certain health conditions might be associated with specific living environments or habits. While this broader dataset offers a richer picture, the limited sample size makes it difficult to determine whether any observed patterns are statistically significant or merely coincidental. Future surveys with larger and more diverse participant pools would be essential for validating these early findings and strengthening the evidence base for breed-specific health risks.

The survey was carried out online and distributed via the club's official website, social media platforms, and by encouraging club members to share it with puppy buyers. Although the use of microchip numbers or Kennel Club-registered names was discussed as a way to track individual dogs across future surveys, this was ultimately excluded. The decision was made to preserve anonymity and avoid discouraging participation from owners who may not have immediate access to that information or who were concerned about privacy—particularly if their dog has a health issue.

## **Respondent Demographics**

The survey population consisted of 103 Swedish Vallhunds, all residing in the UK and registered with the Kennel Club. The ages of the dogs ranged from under six months to sixteen years old. Tail type was relatively evenly split, with 57.3% of dogs having full tails and 42.7% having short tails. Among the short-tailed dogs, the largest group were bob tails, making up 20.4% of the total population. There was an almost even distribution between sexes, with 52.4% of dogs being male and 47.6% female. Neutering status showed the majority of dogs were entire, with 61.2% not neutered compared to 38.8% that were neutered. Most dogs were reported to have an ideal body condition, with only 4.9% reported as being above ideal and 3.9% below ideal.

## **Reported Health Issues**

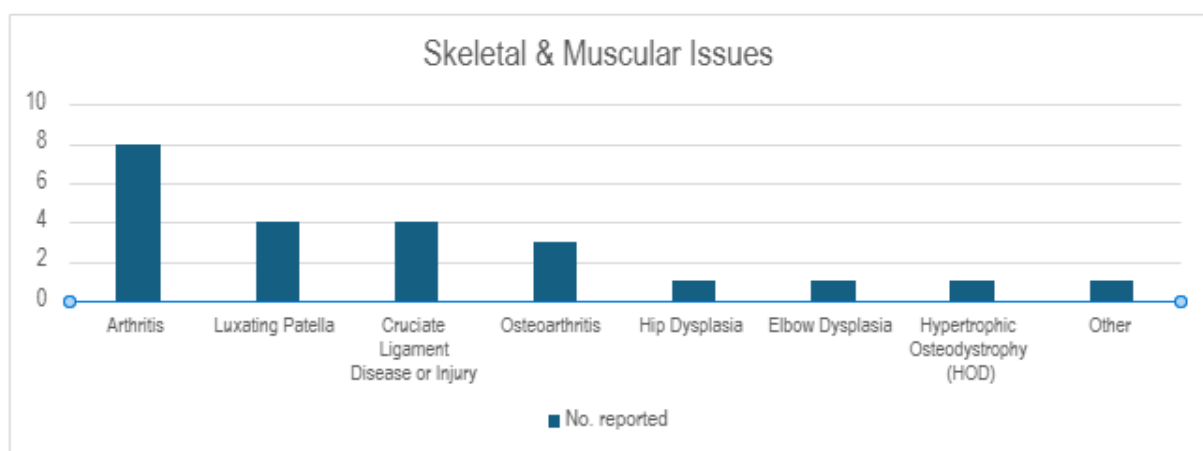
Out of 103 total responses, 31 owners (30.1%) reported that their dog had experienced at least one health issue, either currently or in the past. The remaining 72 respondents (69.9%) indicated that their dog had not experienced any health problems. Of the 31 dogs reported to have experienced health issues, 20 (64.5%) had more than one condition.

To better understand the nature of these health concerns, the reported issues have been grouped into categories, which are outlined in the following sections.

## Skeletal & Muscular Issues

A total of 22 skeletal and muscular conditions were reported, affecting 18 individual dogs. The most commonly reported issue in this category was arthritis, affecting 8 dogs. Several dogs experienced more than one condition within this category.

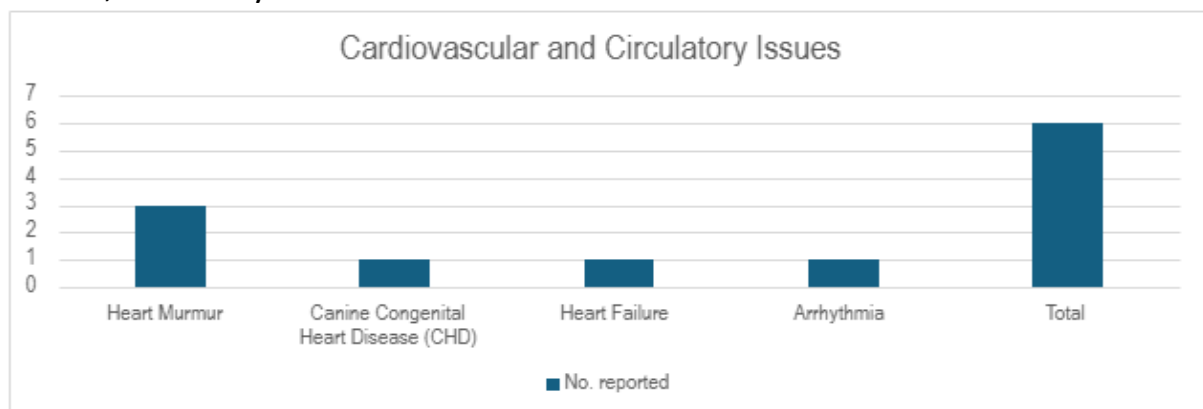
Arthritis was the most common, with 8 reported cases. Luxating patella and cruciate ligament injuries—each reported in 4 cases and less common conditions such as hip and elbow dysplasia, and Hypertrophic Osteodystrophy (HOD), were also noted.



## Cardiovascular and Circulatory Issues

A total of 6 cardiovascular conditions were reported in 3 dogs, indicating that some individuals were affected by multiple heart-related problems.

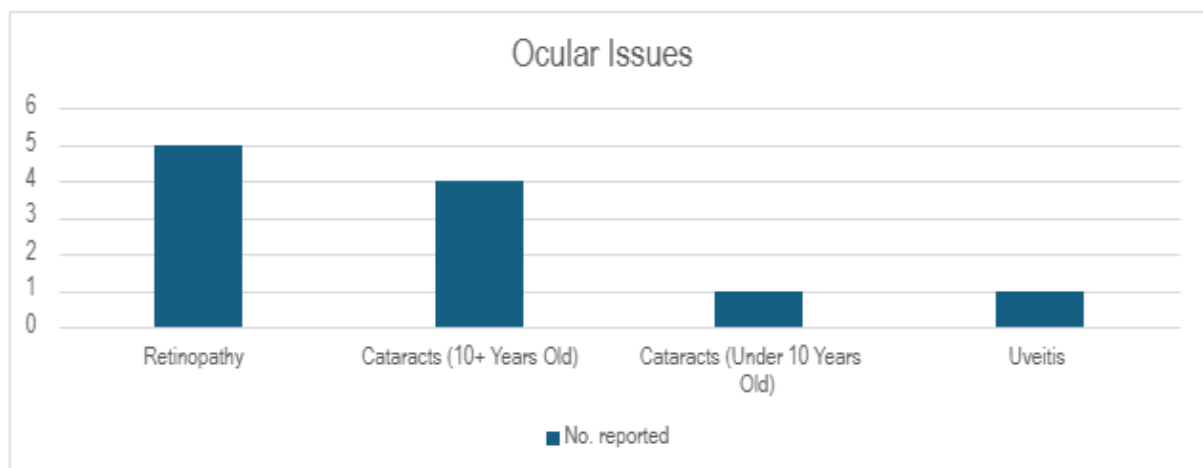
Heart murmurs were the most frequently reported condition (3 cases), followed by isolated reports of canine congenital heart disease (CHD), heart failure, and arrhythmia.



### Ocular Issues

Eye-related conditions were reported in 9 dogs, totalling 11 cases. These ranged from mild to potentially vision-threatening issues.

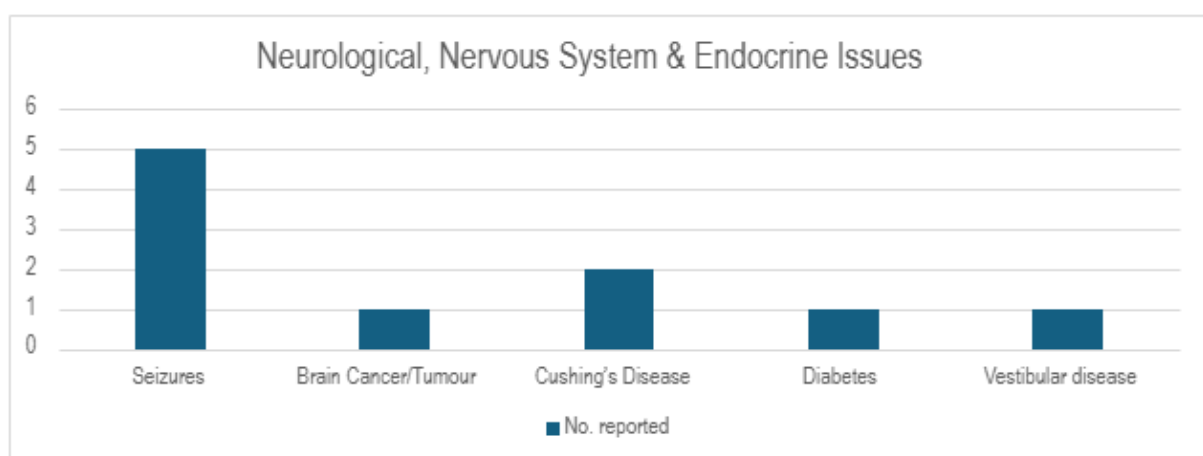
Retinopathy was the most common (5 cases), followed by cataracts—with 4 occurring in dogs over 10 years old and 1 in a younger dog. Single instances of uveitis, an inflammatory eye condition, were also recorded.



### Neurological, Nervous System & Endocrine Issues

This category covered a mix of neurological and hormonal disorders, with 10 reported cases across 7 dogs. These conditions can vary widely in severity and long-term impact.

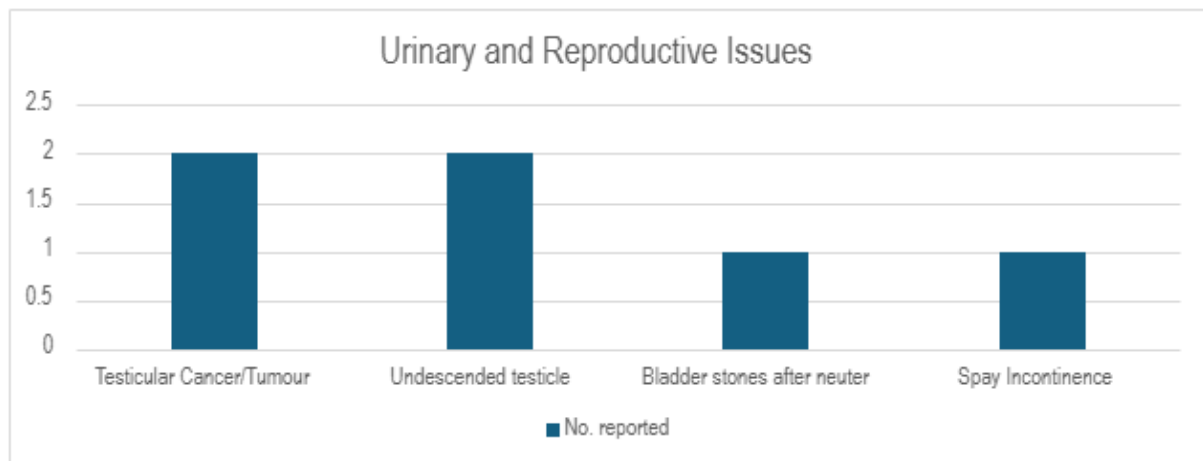
Seizures were the most frequently reported (5 cases), Endocrine disorders such as Cushing's disease (2 cases) and diabetes (1 case) were also noted. Additional reports included brain tumours and vestibular disease, both of which can significantly affect a dog's quality of life.



### Urinary and Reproductive Issues

Six conditions were reported across 6 dogs in this category.

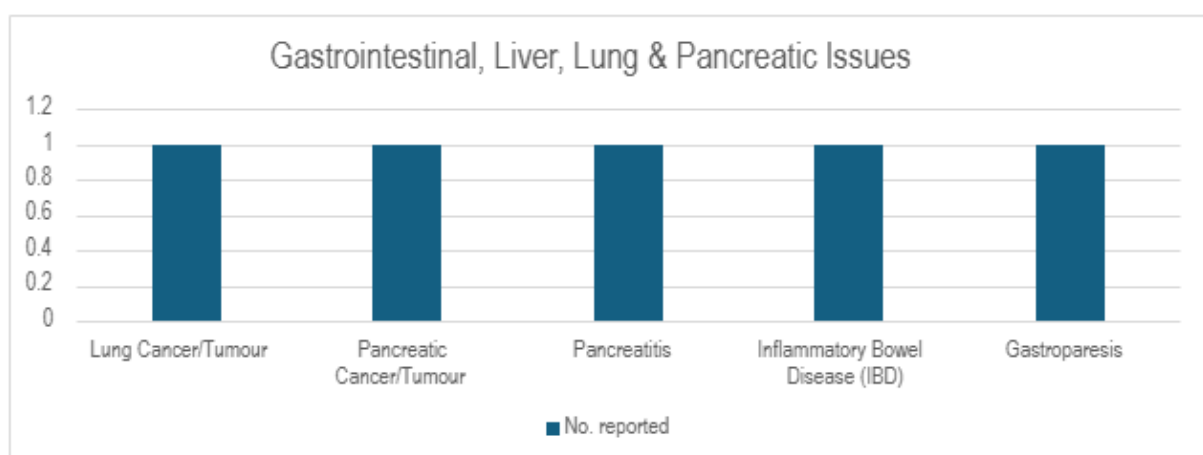
Testicular abnormalities, including testicular cancer and undescended testicles, were the most frequent (2 cases each). Isolated cases of spay incontinence and bladder stones (following neutering) were also reported.



### Gastrointestinal, Liver, Lung & Pancreatic Issues

This category included 5 reports affecting 4 dogs, each involving serious conditions that may impact digestive or respiratory health.

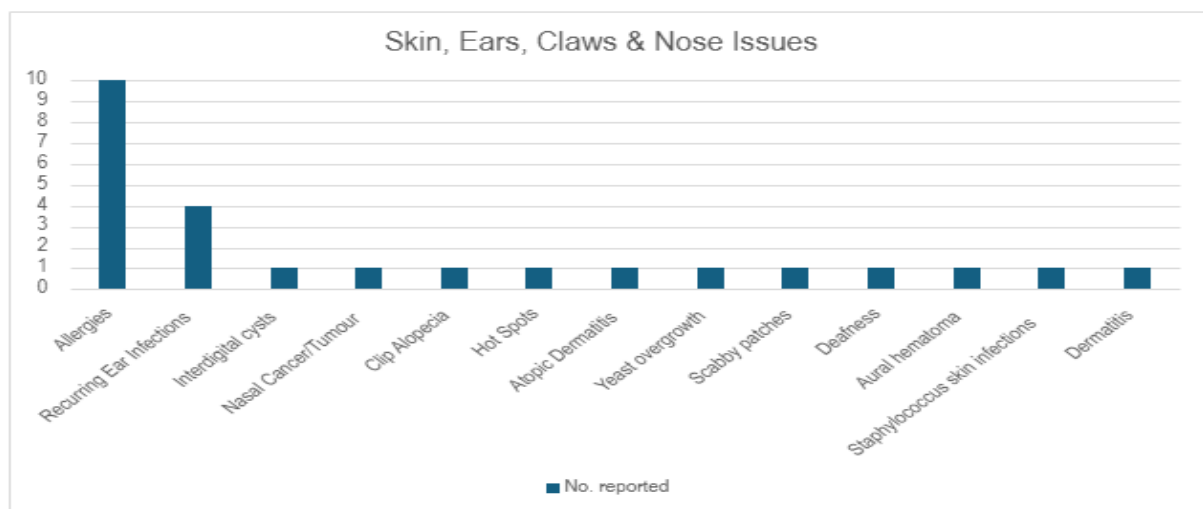
Conditions such as pancreatitis, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and gastroparesis were each reported once. Additionally, rare but severe conditions like lung cancer and pancreatic tumours were each mentioned once.



## Skin, Ears, Claws & Nose Issues

This was the most frequently reported category, with 25 conditions affecting 17 dogs. Skin and ear issues appear to be a common concern within the breed, with a wide range of conditions noted.

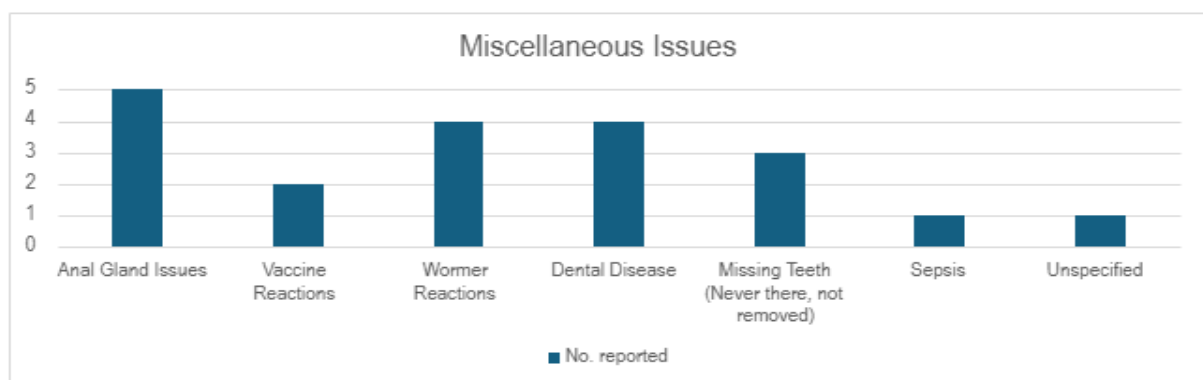
Allergies were the leading issue (10 cases), often manifesting through skin irritation or ear infections. Recurring ear infections (4 cases) and various isolated skin problems—including interdigital cysts, hot spots, and clip alopecia—were also reported. Less common but more serious issues such as nasal cancer and deafness were each reported once.



## Miscellaneous Issues

This category captured a range of conditions that did not clearly fit into the other groups, totaling 20 instances across 18 dogs.

The most commonly reported were anal gland issues (5 cases), dental disease (4 cases), and reactions to wormers or vaccines (6 combined cases). Other reports included missing teeth, sepsis, and one unspecified condition.



## **Correlations and Patterns**

This section explores possible patterns and correlations observed within the survey data. While not conclusive, these trends may help guide future health monitoring and breeding decisions within the breed.

### **Early Neutering**

The majority of the dogs in this group were under the age of 4, with only three dogs over the age of 7. Among dogs neutered before 12 months of age, 55.56% were reported to have at least one health issue. The most commonly reported conditions in this group were skin problems and anal gland issues.

Additionally, three dogs in this early-neutered group were reported to have skeletal or muscular problems, including:

Arthritis (age 12)

Patella luxation (age 4)

Unspecified musculoskeletal issue (age 4)

This may suggest a potential association between early neutering and the development of health issues.

### **Anal Gland Issues and Early Neutering**

Among the five dogs reported to have anal gland issues:

- Four were males neutered before 1 year of age
- One was a female neutered later in life

This distribution may indicate a possible link between early neutering—particularly in males—and an increased likelihood of anal gland problems.



## **Weight and Health**

Out of the five dogs described as overweight, four were reported to have health issues, including three with joint-related conditions (arthritis, hip dysplasia, patella luxation, and elbow problems).

By contrast, the four underweight dogs reported no health issues.

This suggests that being overweight may increase a dog's risk of developing health problems, especially those affecting the joints.

## **Joint Health**

A total of 16 dogs were reported to have joint-related issues. Of these, 11 were over the age of 7, which may be expected given age-related wear and tear.

However, five dogs with joint problems were younger, aged between 2 and 5 years:

- Four had patella luxation/Dysplasia
- One had an unspecified joint condition

These younger dogs were of varying ages and not from the same litter, which could suggest a potential rise in patella issues in recent years, though the cause remains unclear. This may warrant closer monitoring within the breed.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Summary of Key Insights**

The 2024 Swedish Vallhund Society Health Survey has provided valuable insight into the current health status of the breed in the UK. With over double the number of responses compared to the 2018 survey, this year's data offers a more robust snapshot of common conditions and potential emerging concerns.

Importantly, the results continue to support the view that the Swedish Vallhund is, overall, a healthy and resilient breed. Nearly 70% of dogs surveyed (69.9%) were reported as having no known health issues, underscoring the breed's generally sound constitution and strong genetic foundation.

Among the 30.1% of dogs reported to have experienced at least one health issue, 64.5% were affected by more than one condition. The most commonly reported concerns were allergies, arthritis, retinopathy, seizures, and anal gland problems. While these issues are important to monitor, their frequency remains relatively low across the wider population.

Skin, ear, and allergy-related issues formed the most frequently reported category, highlighting the need for continued monitoring in this area.

Orthopaedic problems, particularly arthritis and patella luxation, were notable, with some cases appearing in relatively young dogs.

Data suggest possible associations between early neutering, body condition, and specific health problems—especially joint issues and anal gland problems.

## **Health Priorities for the Breed**

Based on these findings, the following areas appear to be the most pressing health concerns reported for the Swedish Vallhund breed:

- Joint Health – Particularly arthritis and patella issues, including early-onset cases.
- Skin and Allergies – Ongoing issues with allergic reactions, ear infections, and dermatological sensitivity.
- Neurological and Seizure Disorders – Though less common, seizure activity was notable enough to warrant attention.
- Anal Gland Issues – Especially in early-neutered males.
- Eye Conditions – Including retinopathy and age-related cataracts.

These areas should be considered important for breeder awareness alongside the current health screening.

## **Recommendations for Owners, Breeders, and Veterinarians**

For Owners:

- Maintain dogs at a healthy weight to reduce the risk of joint problems.
- Monitor for recurring skin or ear issues, especially in dogs with known allergies.
- Discuss the timing of neutering with your breeder and vet, particularly in light of possible links to joint and anal gland problems.

For Breeders:

- Consider patella health in breeding decisions by avoiding the pairing of dogs with known or suspected patella issues or who have produced issues in their puppies.
- Continue the use of hip scoring, eye testing, and DNA testing where available.
- Consider implementing a voluntary patella grading scheme, given the reported cases in young dogs.

For Veterinarians:

- Be aware of breed-specific predispositions, particularly relating to joint, skin, and eye health.
- Consider discussing delayed neutering with owners of Swedish Vallhunds, especially males, where appropriate.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Research**

Several areas could benefit from closer study or further data collection:

- Patella luxation prevalence and potential increase in younger dogs.
- The long-term health impacts of early neutering, particularly regarding musculoskeletal and anal gland health.
- Allergies and skin conditions, including potential genetic, environmental or dietary triggers.
- Broader analysis of seizures within the breed.

## Appendices

### Survey Health questions

Q1	Is your dog resident in the UK and KC registered? *	Multiple Choice	Q19	Section 3: Your Dogs Lifestyle & Behavior What is your dog's current diet?	Multiple Choice
Q2	Section 1: Your Dogs Health Does/has your dog experienced a health problem either currently or in the past? *	Multiple Choice	Q20	If feeding a commercial food, what one do you feed?	Essay
Q3	Skeletal & Muscular: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q21	What types of exercise does your dog normally receive in an average week? Tick all that apply	Multiple Choice
Q4	Cardiovascular and Circulatory: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q22	In an average week how often is your dog normally walked?	Multiple Choice
Q5	Ocular: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q23	How long is an average walk for your dog?	Multiple Choice
Q6	Neurological, Nervous system & Endocrine: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q24	Do you ever let your dog off the lead? If not why?	Multiple Choice
Q7	Skin, Ears, Claws & Nose: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q25	Is your dog vaccinated?	Multiple Choice
Q8	Gastrointestinal, Liver, Lung & Pancreatic: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q26	Do you de-worm/flea your dog?	Multiple Choice
Q9	Urinary and reproductive: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q27	Would you say your dog is small animal friendly/safe?	Multiple Choice
Q10	Miscellaneous: Please tick any health issue your dogs has/ have had	Multiple Choice	Q28	Not including accidents (such as taking food from your hand ect), puppy teething or play, has your dog ever intentionally ripped/bitten a person?	Multiple Choice
Q11	Section 2: About Your Dog What is your dog's Sex? *	Multiple Choice	Q29	Not including accidents, puppy teething or play, has your dog ever intentionally nipped or bitten another dog?	Multiple Choice
Q12	Is your dog neutered? *	Multiple Choice	Q30	Would you say your dog has any of the following behaviors?	Multiple Choice
Q13	If neutered, at what age was this done? *	Multiple Choice	Q31	Section 4: Dog Activities Have you and your dog ever taken part in the following activities either for fun or competitively?	Multiple Choice
Q14	What is your dog's current Age in years? *	Essay	Q32	How old in months/years was your dog when they started training in these activities?	Essay
Q15	What is your dog's current weight in kg?	Essay	Q33	Would you say your dog has ever been injured while taking part in any of the above activities?	Multiple Choice
Q16	Using the link below what would you say your dog's body condition is? <a href="https://www.royalcanin.co.uk/body-condition-score/score/dog?breed=Swedish+Vallhund">https://www.royalcanin.co.uk/body-condition-score/score/dog?breed=Swedish+Vallhund</a> *	Multiple Choice	Q34	Would you be interested in undertaking any of the following activities either now or in the future with your dogs?	Multiple Choice
Q17	What tail type is your dog? *	Multiple Choice	Q35	If you are not involved in confirmation showing with your dogs why not?	Essay
Q18	How tall is your dog in inches?	Multiple Choice	Q36	Is there anything that could help encourage you to take up confirmation showing if you do not currently?	Essay
			Q37	Would you be interested in a scheme for patella grading?	Multiple Choice

## Survey Health Results

Health survey results			
<b>Does/has your dog experienced a health problem either currently or in the past?</b>		<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. reported</b>
Yes	31	Allergies	10
No	72	Recurring Ear Infections	4
Total	103	Interdigital cysts	1
		Nasal Cancer/Tumour	1
		Clip Alopecia	1
Skeletal & Muscular		Hot Spots	1
<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. reported</b>	Atopic Dermatitis	1
Arthritis	8	Yeast overgrowth	1
Luxating Patella	4	Scabby patches	1
Cruciate Ligament Disease or Injury	4	Deafness	1
Osteoarthritis	3	Aural hematoma	1
Hip Dysplasia	1	Staphylococcus skin infections	1
Elbow Dysplasia	1	Dermatitis	1
Hypertrophic Osteodystrophy (HOD)	1	<b>Total</b>	25
Other	1	<b>Dogs</b>	17
<b>Total</b>	22		
<b>Dogs</b>	18	<b>Gastrointestinal, Liver, Lung &amp; Pancreatic</b>	
		Lung Cancer/Tumor	1
Cardiovascular and Circulatory		Pancreatic Cancer/Tumor	1
<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. reported</b>	Pancreatitis	1
Heart Murmur	3	Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)	1
Canine Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)	1	Gastroparesis	1
Heart Failure	1	<b>Total</b>	5
Arrhythmia	1	<b>Dogs</b>	4
<b>Total</b>	6		
<b>Dogs</b>	3		
		<b>Urinary and reproductive</b>	
Cardiovascular and Circulatory		Ocular	
<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. reported</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. reported</b>
Heart Murmur	3	Retinopathy	5
Canine Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)	1	Cataracts (10+ Years Old)	4
Heart Failure	1	Cataracts (Under 10 Years Old)	1
Arrhythmia	1	Uveitis	1
<b>Total</b>	6	<b>Total</b>	11
<b>Dogs</b>	6	<b>Dogs</b>	9
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		<b>Neurological, Nervous system &amp; Endocrine</b>	
Anal Gland Issues	5	<b>Condition</b>	<b>No. reported</b>
Vaccine Reactions	2	Seizures	5
Wormer Reactions	4	Brain Cancer/Tumor	1
Dental Disease	4	Cushing's Disease	2
Missing Teeth (Never there, not removed)	3	Diabetes	1
Sepsis	1	Vestibular disease	1
Unspecified	1	<b>Total</b>	
<b>Total</b>	20	<b>Dogs</b>	7
<b>Dogs</b>	18		