

# *The Little Viking Cattle Dog:* **THE SWEDISH VALLHUND**

*Odd-colored Corgi?*  
*Miniature German Shepherd?*  
*Small Norwegian Elkhound? No!*

*Swedish Vallhund? Yes!*

Wherever we go with our “Valls”, intrigued, people stop us and ask about our Swedish Vallhunds, or Vastgotaspets (pronounced: vas-YEA-ta-spets), as they are called in Sweden. We’d like people to get acquainted with this wonderful little dog.

The breed dates back over a thousand years in Sweden, and these “big dogs in little packages” are still seen working on farms. Valls are said to be related to small European wolves and still retain some wolf-like traits. Similar to wolves, the Vallhund has a relatively big head and teeth, often comes in season only once a year, has smaller litters and retains some of the alertness of their ancestors. Most will bark if aware of an intruder, and many have a big-dog bark.

Vallhund, translated from Swedish, means herding dog. They are exceptionally versatile and can do everything from herding, agility, search and rescue, to water retrieval, tracking, obedience, detection work and flyball. They also make loving companions and pets. Swedish Vallhunds are fun-loving, loyal and dedicated to their owners and families. They get along well with other animals and love children. Brought to the U.S. in 1985, their numbers have been growing slowly, but steadily. There are over 1000 Valls in the U.S. at this time.

This medium-sized breed ranges from 12 -14 inches in height and weighs between 23-35 pounds, with males being somewhat larger than females.

They are sturdy and, in general, healthy and long-lived. Some individuals attain nearly 20 years of age. There have been some occurrences of eye problems, but few major health issues. Anyone wishing to purchase a puppy should make sure they are dealing with a reputable breeder who can provide documentation of having tested their breeding stock.

Vallhund coat colors are similar to those found in wolves, most commonly red or grey sable. Coarse, black guard hairs in the outer coat give the sabled appearance. Occasionally, there are litters with pups that would be classified as blue, cream, red or white, some without true sabbling, some spotted and some over one third white with colored spots. These pups are considered mismarks and are not acceptable colors for show or breeding. However, mis-marked pups are generally healthy and make wonderful pets.

There are 5 different tail types acceptable for this breed in the United States: *docked* (cut tail), *natural bob* (naturally no tail), *stub* (a short tail, up to 4 inches long), *spitz* (a full tail that curls over the back) and *long* (over 4 inches long of any shape or carriage).





People wishing to buy a Swedish Vallhund puppy should expect to wait due to a scarcity of litters worldwide. We encourage people to meet and spend time with a Vall, if possible, and research the breed thoroughly before purchasing. Joining a breed club or a special interest group on the internet can be helpful in acquiring more information about the breed and breeders.

Similar to other herding breeds, the Swedish Vallhund is not for everyone. They are extremely intelligent and intuitive and need mental stimulation. Simply put, they can be a greater training challenge.

Overall, Valls are eager to please and are an enchanting breed. Being owned by a Vall, as a well known Vall owner stated, "is a life enhancing experience." Having several Vallhunds each, we'd have to agree.

For further information on Swedish Vallhunds please go to the SVCA (Swedish Vallhund Club of America) website: [www.swedishvallhund.org](http://www.swedishvallhund.org). You can also search for "Swedish Vallhund" in your favorite search engine to access links for Swedish Vallhund sites around the world. ■



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