

The Saluki

A translation of the breed monography from "Sund Hundavel". A review of inherited diseases.
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Drugs and other medical aspects.

The Saluki, like many other sighthounds, is sensitive to barbiturates. The development of new anesthetics has minimized this problem. The Saluki has a higher percentage of red blood cells in the blood than most other breeds. Creatinine (a substance that originates in muscle tissue and is eliminated by the kidneys) is also present in a higher amount in the blood of a Saluki. Creatinine is used to evaluate the kidney function. (1) The Saluki matures late and can keep fit even at an advanced age. A Saluki can become very old, 16 years is not unique. In Sweden it is fairly common for the breeders to let a bitch whelp for the first time at a mature age (6-7 years). Many puppies have an overshot jaw during the puppyhood. Many of these end up with a normal bite but some get a permanent malocclusion.

Registration by the Swedish Kennel Club

About 100 Salukis are registered yearly. The smooth variety usually numbers less than 10. Virtually all puppies born are registered.

Imports

During the years 1988-92 three dogs have been imported from Australia and one each from England, USA and the Netherlands.

Anomalies reported by the Swedish Saluki Club

The club reports that 1,5% of the male puppies are cryptorchid (incomplete descent of one or both testicles), 2% have umbilical hernia and 2% incomplete dentition or malocclusion.

Diseases reported to occur in the breed

Epilepsy, osteochondrosis, ceroid lipofuscinosis, immune-mediated haemolytic anaemia and thrombocytopaenia and hypothyroidism.

Osteochondrosis

This disease is due to a defect boneforming process. The articular cartilage becomes thick and is separated from the subchondral bone. The dog becomes lame. The mode of inheritance has not been determined. The disease is more common in males and in rapidly growing animals. The nutrition is also influential. In the Saluki breed it is the shoulder joint that is most commonly affected. The symptoms (lameness) are usually present at 4-7 months of age. (2).

Ceroid lipofuscinosis

This is an inherited inborn error of metabolism. Due to the metabolic error, waste products are deposited in all of the dog's cells. This gradually destroys the brain. The dog appears normal up to ½-1 year of age. Then personality changes occur. The dog gets reduced vision, abnormal gait and eventually seizures. It does not survive 2 years of age. Ceroid lipofuscinosis occurs in humans and in several dog breeds. It has been studied closely in English Setters in Norway. An autopsy is required to confirm the diagnosis. In the later stages of the disease the brain is atrophic. The pigmented wasteproducts are seen microscopically. To date it is not possible to diagnose puppies that are not yet ill or the animals that are asymptomatic carriers of the gene. Ceroid lipofuscinosis has been diagnosed in three dogs from the same litter in Sweden in 1994. There have probably been undiagnosed cases before this. The disease has also been reported from England in 1982. The mode of inheritance is autosomal and recessive, which means that both parents of an affected litter carry the gene. (3).

Immune-mediated thrombocytopaenia and haemolytic anaemia

These two diseases are related and often occur together. For unknown reasons the red blood cells and platelets are attacked by the dog's own immune system. This often causes a high fever. In haemolytic anaemia the dog's mucous membranes turn pale and yellowish and the dog becomes weak. In thrombocytopaenia the dog gets haemorrhages in the skin and mucous membranes. Hematuria and bloody stools are other common symptoms. Bitches may have prolonged estrous bleedings. The disease can be inherited by stress ie imbalance of hormones, viral infections, other diseases, drugs, psychological stress. Diagnosis is made by analysis of blood samples. Often a very intensive treatment, generally with cortisone, is needed to save the dog's life. In the Saluki breed there is a tendency for familial occurrence of these problems. No mode of inheritance has been determined, but dogs with autoimmune diseases should be excluded from breeding.

Hypothyroidism

Due to reduced levels of thyroid hormones the dog becomes fat, sleeps a lot and may get dermatological problems. Bitches may have altered estrous cycles and males can have reduced fertility. The symptoms vary a lot between individuals. Diagnosis is made with the aid of a blood sample. The cause of the disease is often an immune-mediated inflammation of the thyroid gland.

Other auto-immune diseases

A few cases of pemphigus have been reported. One case of auto-immune polymyositis has been reported from Norway.

Congenital heart disease

One case of mitral dysplasia has been reported.

Other anomalies reported in international literature

Cystinuria

This is a congenital disease of the kidney in the dog and man. The amino acid cystine is excreted into the urine and there forms insoluble calculi. Apart from the calculus formation the dog is healthy. It is possible to treat the dog with drugs that prevent the formation of calculi (4). Cystinuria has been reported in the breed in Switzerland.

Congenital heart disease

In an article from USA a family of Salukis with a high prevalence of heart disease is described. Of 35 examined dogs 15 had an audible heart murmur. 6 of these were further investigated. They suffered from several different malformations of the heart. All of them had a complete or incomplete patent ductus arteriosus. Ductus arteriosus is a vessel that is present during the fetal period but is normally closed after birth. Some of the dogs also had abnormal heart valves and a stenosis of the pulmonary artery. Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA) has previously been reported in the breed. It is suspected to be common in the USA (5). We've had some cases of PDA in Sweden.

Black hair follicular dysplasia, color mutant alopecia

These diseases are development anomalies of hair follicles of certain colors. All reported cases have concerned parti-color dogs. They've had partial alopecia and a dull coat since puppyhood in the black areas. The rest of the coat is normal. Both anomalies are inherited. They've been reported from the USA 1991 and UK 1995. (6, 7, 8).

Osteochondromatosis

This is a rare anomaly in the development of bone. Big masses of bone and cartilage are formed beside the normal bone. The masses stop growing at the same time as the rest of the skeleton does. The bumps that develop can be mistaken for tumors or infections. In man this disease is inherited in a dominant way. It has been reported in a young Saluki male in USA. (9).

Entropion

The eyelids are inverted. This can be corrected surgically. The anomaly has been reported from the UK. (9).

Persistent pupillary membrane (PPM)

Fetal bloodvessels in the eye do not atrophy as normal. At worst this can cause impaired vision. The defect is inherited in the Basenji but no heritability has been established in the Saluki. (10).

Pseudohermaphroditism

In 1979 a litter where all five pups were hermaphrodites was born in USA. Their external genitalias were mainly female and the internal a mix between male and female. The bitch was suspected to have eaten hormones during pregnancy. (11).

Information from other sources

Sudden death

A sudden death-syndrome has been described in the English magazine Saluki International. The dogs concerned were 2-5 years old and former healthy. The autopsies performed haven't shown any common cause of death. It is suspected that infection has contributed to these deaths. It is important to do a post mortem on all dogs that die without apparent reason.

Statistics of Insurance

In Sweden many dog owners have their pets insured. The statistics of the biggest insurance company Agria show that it is common that Salukis get wounds, get hit by cars and break legs. It is also more common for Salukis to have a rupture of the prostate gland than the average of all insured dogs. It is less common that Saluki bitches get pyometra. The statistics concern the years 1991-1993.

Pure red cell aplasia

A case of this very rare disease of the bone marrow has been described in a two-year-old Saluki bitch. The disease is suspected to be immune-mediated. (12).

Increased bleeding tendency

During the 1980ies several Swedish Salukis died from abnormal bleeding. No diagnosis could be made. Possible causes are von Willebrand's disease, haemophilia A and haemophilia B. (13).

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