

Your Shetland Sheepdog

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



Shetland Sheepdogs: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend and companion and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Shetland sheepdogs, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Loyal and loving companion
- Good with children and other pets
- Excellent watchdog
- Sweet, gentle, and sensitive
- Intelligent and easy to train
- Agile, sturdy, and athletic

No dog is perfect, though, and you may have noticed these characteristics, too:

- Can be wary of and bark at strangers if not socialized properly
- Easily bored if not given something to do, which leads to barking and chewing
- Has a strong herding instinct that can lead to chasing cars and small animals
- Needs daily exercise
- Coat requires regular brushing and grooming
- Has quite a few health problems
- Prone to separation anxiety

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's got her own personality, and you love her for it.



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Your Shetland Sheepdog's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of him. That's why we'll tell you about the health concerns we'll be discussing with you over the life of your Sheltie.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That doesn't mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that he's more at risk than other dogs. We'll describe the most common issues for Shetland sheepdogs to give you an idea of what may come up. Of course we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of the booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Sheltie looking and feeling his best. You'll know what to watch for, and we'll all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

Bleeding Disorders

Your Shetland is prone to a bleeding disorder called hemophilia. We'll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting time before we perform surgery to check for this problem. This is an important test, as we may not know your pet has this disorder until severe bleeding occurs during surgery or after a serious injury.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Shelties live longer than many other breeds and are likely to get cancer in their golden years. Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, and some types are treatable

with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet. If she is overweight, we'll discuss exercise and diet because obesity is a risk factor for some types of cancer.

Cataracts

Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Shetland sheepdogs. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight is an option.

Collie Eye Anomaly

This genetically linked disease causes abnormal development of the eye. In severe cases, the disease can lead to blindness. Unfortunately, there is no treatment. If you're planning to breed your dog, we can refer you to a specialist who will perform an eye screening test to determine if she has this disease. That way, you won't unintentionally pass it along to the next generation.

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. And unfortunately, Shetland sheepdogs are much more likely to have problems with their teeth than other dogs. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy will lose his teeth and be in danger of damaging his kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, the disease may shorten your pet's life by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

Dry Eye

Dry eye, also known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca or KCS, is a disease common in Shelties. The tear glands no longer produce enough tears to keep the eye moist, which results in eye sores and infections. Ouch! Symptoms include a thick discharge, squinting, pawing at the eye, or a dull, dry look instead of a glistening, shiny eye. This is a painful condition; please call us immediately if you notice any of these signs. We'll conduct a tear test each year and, if she has this disease, we'll prescribe ointment that you'll need to apply for the rest of her life.

Hip and Elbow Dysplasia

You've probably heard of this inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis, but did you know it can also be a problem in a Sheltie's elbows? You may notice that he has lameness in his front legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. In some cases, a Shetland sheepdog can be lame as young as six months of age! We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to avoid discomfort and pain. We'll take X-rays of



your dog's bones to identify the disease as early as possible. Surgery is sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia. Keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis two years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering.

Infections

Shelties are susceptible to other bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvovirus, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we'll administer to your dog based on the diseases we see in our area, her age, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity is a significant health problem in dogs and a serious disease that may cause arthritis, some types of cancer, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when he looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love him to death with human food and treats.

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your dog's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas to ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in any number of ways: drinking unclean water, eating or stepping on feces, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventative medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Retained Testicle

Some male Shetlands have a condition present at birth in which one or both testicles do not descend into the scrotum (a condition called cryptorchidism). Instead, the testicle stays in the abdomen, which can cause problems later in life, including cancer. We'll watch for this problem when your pet is a puppy. We recommend removal of both testicles if he has this condition.

Skin Infections

Your pal is susceptible to different kinds of skin infections and diseases. One of them is caused by yeast (*Malassezia dermatitis*). When it infects the ears, it causes itching, redness, and an accumulation of brown waxy discharge. On the skin, it leads to greasy, hairless areas, especially on the neck and throat, with a characteristic yeasty odor. Another common skin disease called seborrhea can cause dry, flaky skin or greasy, oily skin. These diseases make your pet itchy and uncomfortable. Bathing with special shampoos and rinses is helpful, and we'll treat any underlying problems such as allergies. The earlier you call to have skin problems checked out, the less likely it is that you will end up with an itchy, bald, smelly dog to take care of. You don't want that, and neither does she!

Spaying or Neutering

One of the best things you can do for your Sheltie is to have him neutered (called spaying in females). In males, this means we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, it means we surgically remove the uterus and ovaries. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. This is convenient for you and easy for your friend. Don't worry; we'll let you know what specific problems we'll look for when the time arrives.

Thyroid Problems

Shetlands are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, lethargy, mental dullness, sleeping excessively, fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood screening test annually to look for the disease. Treatment is usually simple: replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

Taking Care of Your Shetland

Sheepdog at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch his diet, make sure he gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush his teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for him. This is when we’ll give him the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Shelties. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures he will need throughout his life, and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Shetland sheepdog live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime.

- ✓ Brush her coat weekly and have her groomed as necessary.
- ✓ Shelties have serious problems with their teeth, so you’ll need to brush them at least three times a week!

Diet and Exercise

We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight Shelties are more prone to cancer, ligament tears, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give him people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for his age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, and don’t overdo exercise.

What to Watch For

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs in your Shetland sheepdog:

- ✓ Vomiting or chronic diarrhea
- ✓ Weight loss or weight gain
- ✓ Lumps, bumps, and moles
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Limping or lameness
- ✓ Hair loss
- ✓ Coughing or difficulty breathing
- ✓ Episodes of weakness
- ✓ Pot-belly appearance
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, or discharge in the ear
- ✓ Dry, itchy, flaky, or oily skin

Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit www.Genesis4Pets.com.

Your Sheltie counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to ensure that your pal has the best health care possible: health care that’s based on her breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns.

Health Evaluation Schedule for Shetland Sheepdogs

Now that you’ve read about the health issues we’ll be monitoring, we wanted to give you an at-a-glance summary of what services we’ll provide to keep your Sheltie happy and healthy. It may seem like your pet is prone to quite a few problems, but don’t worry; we’ll take the lead in keeping her healthy for a lifetime. We’ll review these health-care steps with you in more detail, but please feel free to ask questions or voice concerns at any time.

Studies to determine the frequency of inheritance or disease in this breed either have not been completed or are inconclusive. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed.



How We'll Keep Your Shetland Sheepdog Healthy

*Puppy to Adolescent:
Infant to 17 in People Years*

*Adult: 18 to 39
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59
in People Years*

(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Shetland Sheepdog-Specific Problems We're Looking For
<input type="radio"/>	6–8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal parasite test and/or deworming Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Retained testicle Heart murmurs Hernias Proper dental alignment Parasites
<input type="radio"/>	10–12 weeks	Brief physical examination Heartworm prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
<input type="radio"/>	14–16 weeks	Brief physical examination Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infections Tonsillitis Parasites
<input type="radio"/>	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Blood clotting time Hip and elbow evaluation	Retained testicle Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Hemophilia Hip and elbow dysplasia
<input type="radio"/>	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and elbow evaluation Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Skin infections Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Hip and elbow dysplasia Heartworms and other parasites
<input type="radio"/>	2 years through 8 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and elbow evaluation Internal organ health evaluation Thyroid testing Tear test Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Skin infections Dental disease Healthy weight Hip and elbow dysplasia Internal organ health and function Thyroid function Dry eye Heartworms and other parasites
<input type="radio"/>	9 years through 11 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and elbow evaluation Senior internal organ health evaluation Thyroid testing Tear test Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Skin infections Dental disease Healthy weight Arthritis Hip and elbow dysplasia Internal organ health and function Thyroid function Dry eye Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
<input type="radio"/>	12 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Thyroid testing Tear test Glaucoma screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Cataracts Skin infections Dental disease Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Thyroid function Dry eye Glaucoma Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.