



**SPECIAL EDITION**  
October 2019

## **AVLS OUTCROSS PROGRAM**

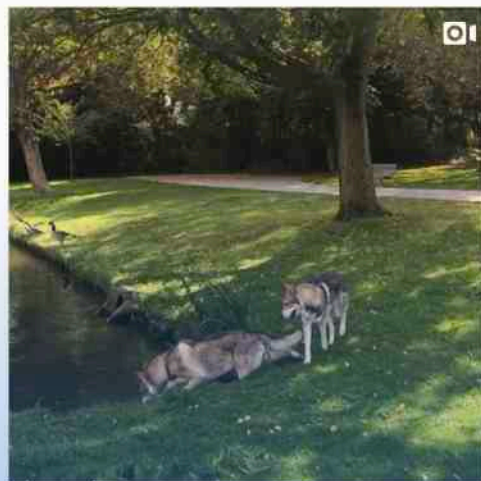
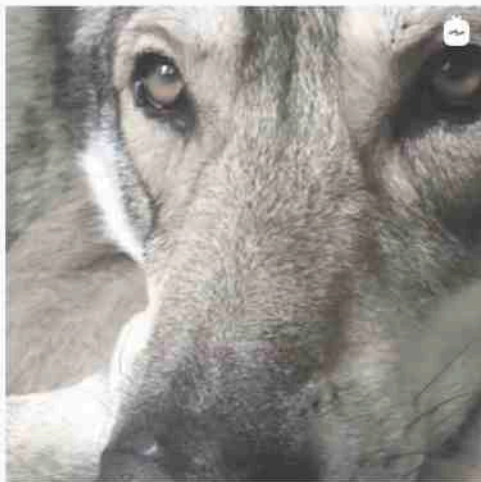
A good overview of the considerations, objectives and results of the outcross program of the AVLS so far.

# **HOW WAS IT AGAIN?**

## **ABOUT THE OUTCROSS PROGRAM OF AVLS**

Special Edition. October 2019





**MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW OUR  
ENGLISH INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT:**

**[INSTAGRAM.COM/AVLS\\_SAARLOOSWOLFHONDEN](https://www.instagram.com/avls_saarlooswolfhonden)**

# FOREWORD

## AN ENGLISH MAGAZINE ABOUT A PROPER AND OFFICIAL DUTCH BREED; THE SAARLOOSWOLFDOG. FOR READERS THAT MIGHT ALREADY HAVE ONE (OR TWO, OR MORE), WANT ONE, OR SIMPLY CONSIDER ONE.

As the Association of Saarlooswolfhond Lovers (AVLS) we stand up for the interests of all Saarlooswolfdogs and welcome everybody that supports our goal; to ensure the Saarlooswolfdog is available for future generations to come. This probably sounds logical but is not that easy.

With around 50 puppies being born per year in this day and age in the Netherlands (back in the nineties there were about 90 puppies born per year), sound breeding choices while avoiding inbreeding, optimal health combinations (including carriers), genetic variety, character and looks, are not simple.

But there are different lines abroad some say. Why don't you use those then? We do.

We urge our members to have their dog tested and openly display the outcomes in MydogDNA for anyone to use. We have a stud list on our website, where anyone, member or not can introduce his or her male dogs to use for mating.

Our breeders travel to Germany with their bitch and puppies are bought from Belgian, French or Eastern European breeders. We are even looking into artificial insemination opportunities for the UK at the moment.

But the Saarlooswolfdog is a young breed. Those German or Italian lines originate in the Netherlands. Often within a few generations you're back to the same Dutch genes we have ourselves. And it's that small gene pool that has us worried for almost ten years now. Because fewer pups means less choice in breeding combinations. Meaning a lesser immune system. Meaning smaller litters. Meaning new health problems popping up.

It's like that floor painter that starts off at the door and finds himself literally cornered in. Once you realize you went wrong, it is near impossible to get out of that corner without messing up your new floor and starting all over again. The AVLS is working hard on painting our floor from the right side of the room.

By facilitating and encouraging our members to breed. Organizing courses, arranging discounts for MydogDNA, opening up our database AND doing an official outcross program, recognized by the Dutch Kennel Club(DKC) . It is that outcross program this magazine focuses on and distinguishes the AVLS the most from its sister organisations.

Should you have any questions, we are here for you.



INEKE

POMPEN

(president, AVLS)

[Ineke.pompen@gmail.com](mailto:Ineke.pompen@gmail.com)



# HOW WAS IT AGAIN?



## ABOUT THE OUTCROSS PROGRAM OF AVLS

This article provides a good overview of the considerations, objectives and results of the outcross program of the AVLS so far.



# THE HOLY GRAIL

Pedigree dogs are considered the aristocracy in the world of dogs. They show the characteristics of their breed, and preferably also something indefinable as 'nobility'. Varietal purity has long been the holy grail of dog breeding. The more similar, the more homogenous (or the smaller the genetic variation), the better. Over the last few years, this image has shifted. Breeders start to realise that it is impossible to breed pedigree dogs in the closed studbook system for decades both varietally pure and healthy as well.

An outcross programme basically crossbreeds pedigree dogs with another variety or so-called lookalikes. Until recently, just expressing the idea was akin to asking for a slice of pork belly at a vegetarian's dinner party. And that attitude still exists in the dog world.

“Until recently, just expressing the idea was akin to asking for a slice of pork belly at a vegetarian's dinner party”

## GROWING ENTHUSIASM

The AVLS (the General Association of Saarloos Wolfdog lovers) was among the first breeding associations in the Netherlands to develop a plan of action for outcross. At first, many obstacles needed to be conquered. It was all new and people needed to get used to the idea, but over time enthusiasm has gradually grown. Our members saw very healthy and good-looking outcross dogs

shown by proud owners, even though the first generation did obviously only partly measure up to breeding standards. It will take three or four generations for the differences to disappear. We must be patient.

## CONCERNS

“a commission started to chart the health among the population, based on grave concerns”

The reason we took this road was not to counteract extremely bred characteristics. That was not necessary. The appearance of the Saarlooswolfdog still reminds strongly of its ancestor, the wolf. Owners like to say affectionately: 'it's a dog with a hint of nature'. At first sight, there seemed nothing wrong. The dogs are built powerfully and harmoniously. They are vigorous and deploy beautiful movement. In short, a wonderful breed.

So, why go for an outcross anyway? When the AVLS started off back in 2007, a commission started to chart the health among the population, based on grave concerns. Vitality was dwindling. Genetic defects like degenerative myelopathy (paralysis of the hindquarters) and dwarfism started to appear. Increased inbreeding led to increased risk of cancer and other diseases. An immune system weakened by inbreeding cannot react adequately to invading viruses and bacteria. And when the inbreeding would increase, the fertility of the dogs would be in danger. We first sat down with the Dutch Kennel Club in 2010 to voice our concerns.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE

The AVLS shared all knowledge with her membership, fully convinced that they should be aware of the threats and problems. We held meetings, where scientists and breeding specialists shared information. We asked geneticists Jack Windig PhD and Marianne Spies-Stoop PhD to analyse the population structure and size, inbreeding coefficient and growth, mutual kinship etcetera. Their conclusion was: take immediate action, while you still can.

“Their conclusion was: take immediate action, while you still can.”

## THE ACTION PLAN

Genetic difficulties and decreasing fertility would become bigger problems as the inbreeding would increase. On top of sensible breeding, extension of the gene pool was also necessary. That became the fundament of the action plan. The larger part of our members were by now convinced this needed to be done. They started to experience problems in finding breeding combinations without risks of birth defects. Some members feared new genetic defects would be imported by cross breeding. To prevent that, it was decided to check every breed on all health issues in both breeds. A number of members considered that due to cross-breeding with -amongst others- Czech wolfdogs in the past, genetic variety would be sufficient. The geneticists used this new information to generate new calculations. The effect on the population showed very little change and the conclusion remained

the same. After lengthy discussions and some alterations, everybody finally agreed to the plan of action. It was approved unanimously in 2012.

“After lengthy discussions and some alterations, everybody finally agreed to the plan of action”

## FOUR BREEDS, ONE LOOK-ALIKE

The first outcross took place in 2014 and we are presently 4,5 years ahead. Four non-related breeds and one lookalike have so far been crossed in. We are at the start of the process, and we do not by any measure have answers to all questions. We do have learned a lot. For instance, crossbreeding with a relatively related breed results in less diversity. Far and foremost, we have learned that a project of this nature only stands a chance when carried by breeders and owners.

Regarding the choice of suitable breeds, we have proceeded very carefully. Cooperation of other breeder associations proved crucial. The selection committee sought out other associations and visited their club days. With two associations of the Swiss white shepherd we gave a presentation on the need to crossbreed the Saarlooswolfhond.



“The Swiss white shepherd is both in appearance and in character pretty close to our breed”

## WHITE SHEPHERD

As the first breed, the Swiss white shepherd was selected. It might have been obvious to use the Czech wolfdog, but our members felt that its character differs too much from the Saarlooswolfdog. The Swiss white shepherd is both in appearance and in character pretty close to our breed. We selected an experienced male who had already proven to deliver a good prodigy. He was tested on all genetic defects in both breeds, as the plan of action prescribes. The first nest was born on August 14, 2014. The selection committee judged the pups on health, behaviour and varietal purity. Meanwhile, two F2 litters have been born. Some of this F2 are so close to the Saarlooswolfdog that they qualified as excellent during our champions club match in 2018. The first F3 litter was born in 2019. Breeding is unfortunately not always a bed of roses. One puppy from this litter had to be put to sleep because of an open back and a deformed body.

“Notably all litters of the first generations (F1) were quite homogenous”

## SELECTION COMMITTEE

The selection committee consists of one Saarlooswolfdog judge, two deputies of the Dutch Kennel Club (Raad van Beheer) and two members of the AVLS. The committee advises the board. When the pups are about 6 weeks old, the first assessment is made. Notably all litters of the first generations (F1) were quite homogenous. Characteristics of both breeds can clearly be seen, both in appearance and character. The F2, always bred back to purebred Saarlooswolfdog, shows more variation. Some of the pups tend to be more like the Saarlooswolfdog. Our experience so far is that the somewhat reserved character of the Saarlooswolfdog returns quickly.



## FINAL CHOICE

“Dogs with good health and character who get the closest to the breed standard are picked out.”

After about 8 months an interim assessment is made and when the dog is about 20 months old the selection committee makes its definite choice. Prior to this selection, the dogs get a health check. The results are part of the judgements. Dogs with good health and character who get the closest to the breed standard are picked out. When older than 24 months they are allowed to breed. To guard genetic dispersion, the breeder is advised by the selection committee on a suitable breeding partner.

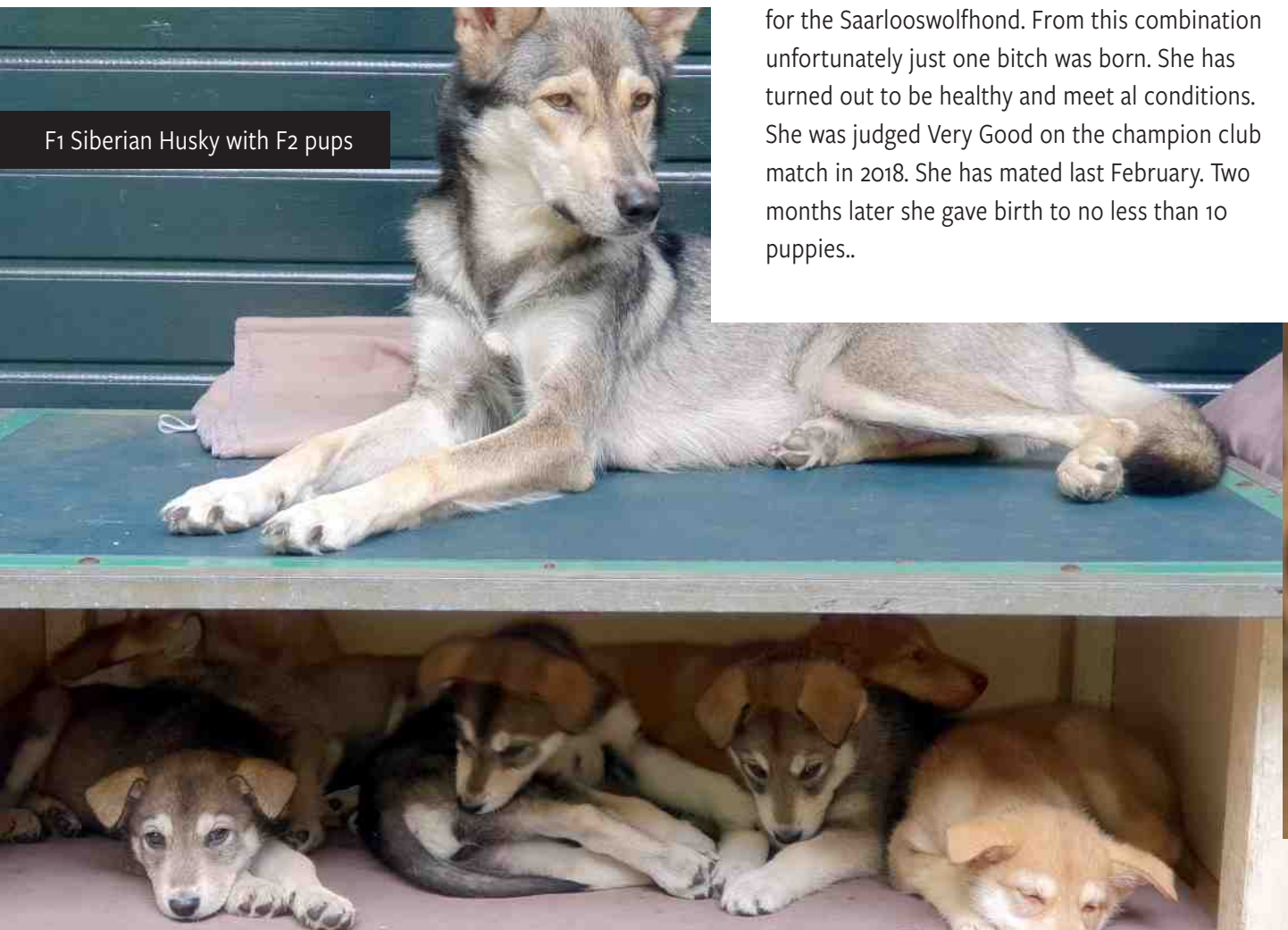
## AGREEMENT

Pup owners sign an agreement as commitment to the project. That entails their presence at the assessments and judgements, and that they will cooperate when their dog is selected for breeding. On top of that they must get the prescribed health checks done. We agreed with the Dutch Kennel Club that only after approval of the AVLS board, the dogs can be registered in the auxiliary books. In practice, this means that breeding with the first generations is only allowed when the selection committee has advised positively.

## SIBERIAN HUSKY

For the second breed, we chose a working line of the Siberian husky. This breed combines excellent physical condition, fine physical qualities and good health. The selection committee was searching for atypical specimens: too tall for the breed standard, longer heads or no curly tail. They were gentle, social and friendly dogs, very well suited for the Saarlooswolfhond. From this combination unfortunately just one bitch was born. She has turned out to be healthy and meet all conditions. She was judged Very Good on the champion club match in 2018. She has mated last February. Two months later she gave birth to no less than 10 puppies..

F1 Siberian Husky with F2 pups





# PODENCO

After a presentation of several breeds, the members could make another choice. They chose the Podenco Iberico (male), the Norwegian Elkhound (bitch) and the Dutch shepherd (male or bitch). Only the last one has not been deployed. The Podenco was selected because it is an ancient and healthy breed with beautiful, high-heeled movement. The dogs reach a high age and their character is stable and self-assured. They are very good-natured, very friendly and often slightly reserved towards strangers. A good fit for the Saarlooswolfdog. The Podenco litter was born in 2017. They are two brown males with hardly any wolf pattern. This coat pattern, typical for the Saarlooswolfdog, will be brought back in future generations.



F1 Podenco x SWH

“They are very good-natured, very friendly and often slightly reserved towards strangers”



F1 Norwegian Elkhound x SWH

## NORWEGIAN ELKHOUND

After that, it was the turn of the Norwegian Elkhound. For the first time we used a bitch from another breed. That was previously not possible. Procedure is simply that all pups are registered in the studbook of the bitch's breed. But due to the very small litters of Saarlooswolfdog bitches, the choice was limited. The Dutch Kennel Club was aware of this problem and agreed to deviate from the standard procedure and allow pups from bitches of a different breed to be registered as Saarlooswolfdog.

“But due to the very small litters of Saarlooswolfdog bitches, the choice was limited”

And indeed, we had better results. The Elkhounds dog's litter was a lot bigger with its 6 puppies. The Norwegian Elkhound breed is courageous but reserved. The dogs are exceptionally loyal to their pack. It's a very friendly breed without any aggression. Colour and coat pattern are close to the Saarlooswolfhond. The Norwegian Elkhound has a black mask that first could be seen in the Saarlooswolfdog as well. Some of them still carry the gene for the mask. The challenge in this combination is the tail, that Elkhounds carry in a strict curl on its back. With the F1, that is already less visible. When in rest, some of the outcross dogs already carry their tail saber style like the Saarlooswolfdog. In the next generations, the selection will concentrate on tail carriage and height. The F1 has strikingly powerful teeth, just like the F1 of the Swiss white shepherd.

## NORTHERN INUIT

Lastly, in November a lookalike dog was selected from the non-acknowledged breed Northern Inuit dog. A lookalike is a dog that, although it resembles the breed, has no FCI pedigree. Fortunately, we knew much about the background of the chosen male. He made a great impression by his calm and friendly nature. After all health checks were done the F1 has been born. The 7 pups look surprisingly like Saarlooswolfdogs. Two registered Indian Dogs were unfortunately the carriers of the hereditary defect DM.

“After all, the reason for outcross is, in addition to broadening the genetic variation, the reduction of hereditary disorders”

The selection committee did not consider it justified to use these dogs, however promising, for breeding. After all, the reason for outcross is, in addition to broadening the genetic variation, the reduction of hereditary disorders. After these five crossbreeds the selection committee recommended a short break to monitor the development of the descendants.

## SECOND EXAMINATION LOOK-ALIKES

A second examination of lookalike dogs will take place in October 2019. The first examination delivered, as stated, only one male. Several owners have registered their lookalike dog. Enthusiastic reactions also came from abroad, but these males cannot participate, as they do not live in the Netherlands. According to the regulations of the Dutch Kennel club, dogs that are registered in the Dutch studbook must reside in the Netherlands.

## DANGER OF INCREASING INBREEDING

To keep a population healthy, the increase in inbreeding per generation must remain below 0.5%. We have seen a decline in recent years, so we are doing reasonably well in that regard. In the context of healthy breeding, it is also very wise to use as many different males as possible. This prevents too many half-brothers and half-sisters from being born. It is therefore important to limit the number of matings per male, otherwise the outcross will at most have a temporary effect.





## CAREFUL SELECTION AND MONITORING

Science assists us when we seek answers to questions like how often and when cross breeding is necessary. In 2018, Windig en Doekes of Wageningen University have started research. The AVLS database, which goes all the way back to the first ancestors, has been used in this research. It clearly shows that outcross effects can vary. Careful selection and monitoring are crucial, but the structure of the population is equally important. As many males as possible must be used, or the inbreeding will keep increasing. The outcross will have only temporary effect. Descendants of selected outcross-dogs must be used permanently, but breeding purebred Saarlooswolfdogs is even more important to have enough selection material.

## HOW MUCH OUTCROSS IS NEEDED VERSUS PUREBRED DOGS

The answer to this question is important. In addition to expanding genetic diversity, the breed type must of course be retained. With too much outcross, loss of breed type occurs and that is of course not the intention. We ultimately want to breed Saarlooswolfhonden. In addition to outcross, it also helps to breed more purebred Saarlooswolfhonden.

With more puppies, there is a broader breeding base and more options are available for the breed. The outcross program always crosses back on purebred Saarlooswolfhonden, which means that the purebred part of each outcross generation increases. This share is 50% in the first, 75% in the second, 87.5% in the third and 93.75% in the fourth generation. In every next generation, this percentage increases, so that after a while we can again speak of purebred Saarlooswolfhonden but now with a healthy and varied gene pool.

## MAINTAINING BREED TYPE

In order to maintain breed type, 9 purebred puppies must be born on every F1 outcross pup. With all subsequent generations in the outcross program, the Saarlooswolfhond share will increase and the ratio between born outcross dogs and purebred dogs can become smaller. For the second generation (F2) it therefore applies that 5 purebred puppies must be born on every outcross pup. For the F3 and subsequent generations, that must be 3 purebred puppies on each outcross pup. The birth rates show that we are well on schedule.



# NOT FOR THE SHORT TERM

“We must continue regularly to keep the population genetically healthy.”

The outcross programme runs to 2025, but this project is not for the short term. We will not reach our goals by crossbreeding a few times. We must continue regularly to keep the population genetically healthy.

## A REAL BREAKTHROUGH

A lot of extra information becomes available this way, enabling DNA analysis to develop into an important and additional tool to determine the best breeding combinations. Nowadays, the wind in the world of dog breeding seems to have turned. From total rejection to cautious acceptance of outcross. The holy grail will probably never be found. In the meantime, what we can do is try to breed our pedigree dogs as healthy as possible.

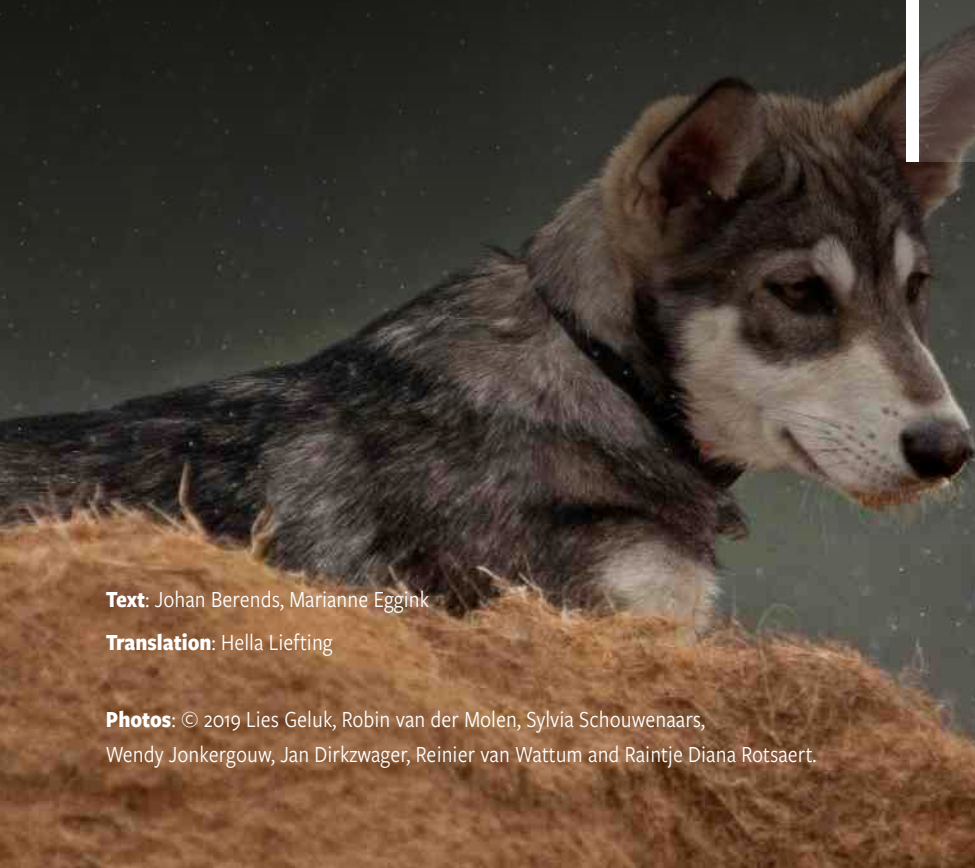
In recent years, DNA analysis has offered a real breakthrough. We are much better prepared to find more and better breeding combinations. AVLS stimulates saving Saarlooswolfdogs' DNA in the Finnish database MyDogDna.

“We are much better prepared to find more and better breeding combinations”

**Text:** Johan Berends, Marianne Eggink

**Translation:** Hella Liefing

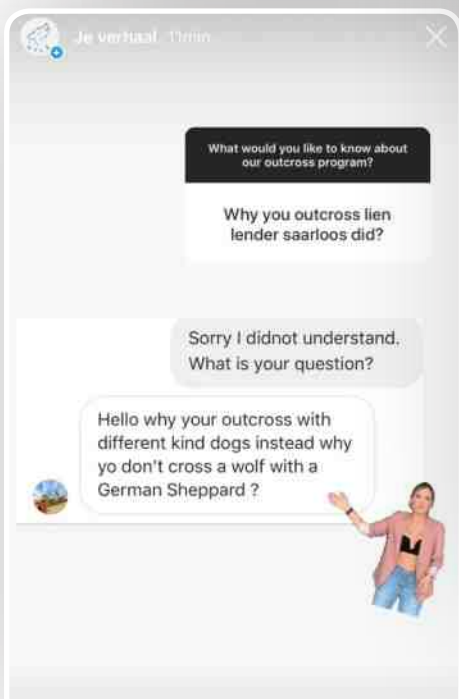
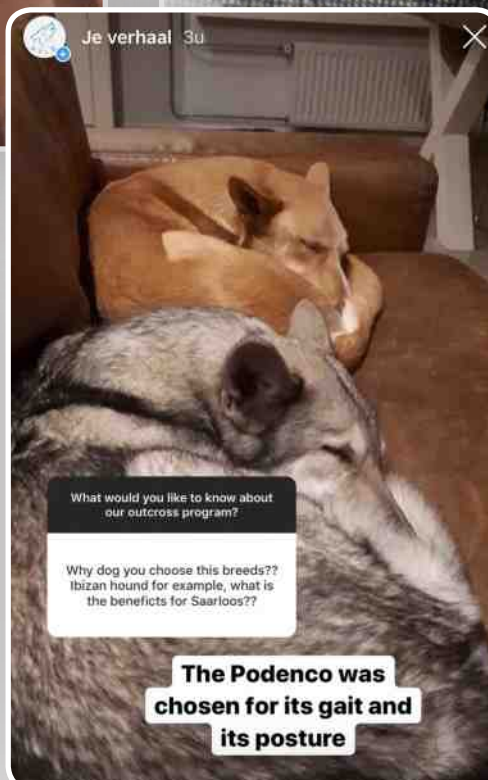
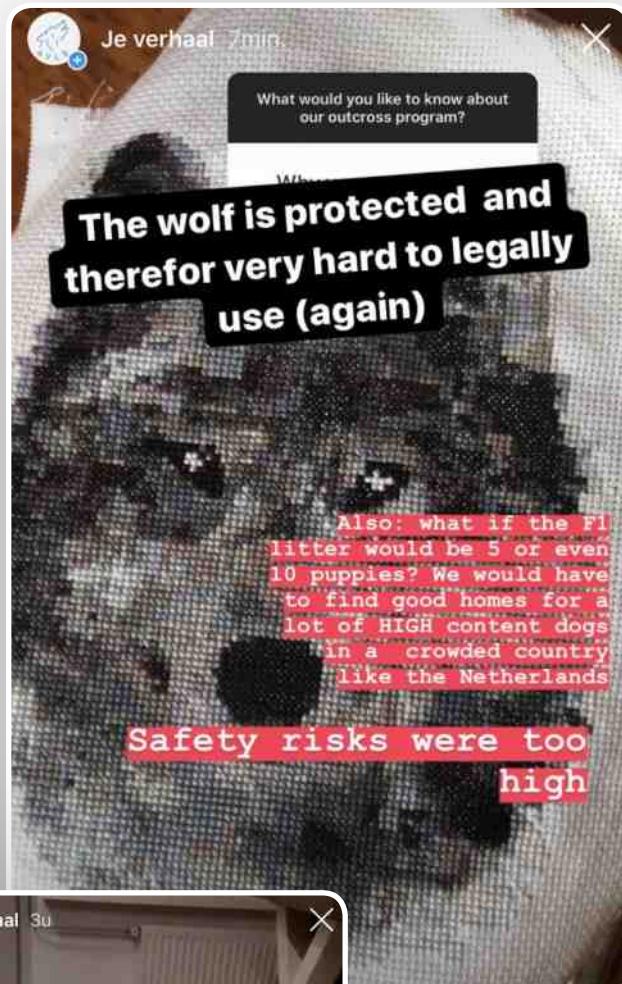
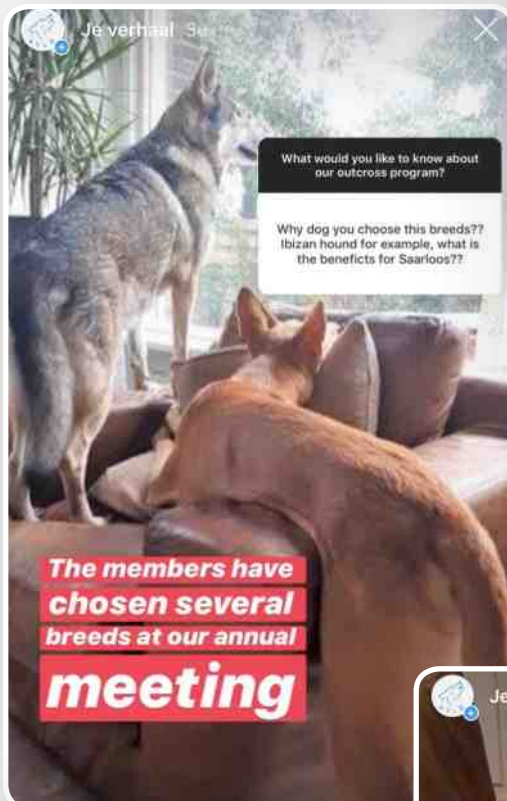
**Photos:** © 2019 Lies Geluk, Robin van der Molen, Sylvia Schouwenaars, Wendy Jonkergouw, Jan Dirkzwager, Reinier van Wattum and Raintje Diana Rotsaert.





# INSTAGRAM

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



# WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER EVEN CONSIDER A SAARLOOSWOLFDOG.

## BUT STILL GET ONE.

A column by: Ineke Pompen

When we went home from Johan and Mariannes back in the day, they really tried. Saarlooswolfdog peed and poo-ed everywhere and for the life of Brian could not be house trained. They vomited and drooled all over the car. They were borderline shy (that whole evening we only managed to sort of brush Tunka's back but Shala and Lica were nowhere in sight) and often more focused on women than men. They weren't dogs for crowds and you could basically never go anywhere anymore.

Let's call these the usual promo ads.

What they omitted to tell though was that Saarlooswolfdogs preferably shed one after the other. After having changed your vacuum cleaners bag 3 times a month you think, boy we made it, and then the other one starts.

That you choose walking areas and times based on: are there any cows/sheep/horses in an area of 500 meters? Are there other people walking there with fluffies on the loose? How close by is the bike path/motorway in case they go after a hare or rabbit?

That from now on you only dare to return to a handful of restaurants after the waiter has been literally stepping over a snoring Thorgal with trays and plates in his hand.

That by the way most waiters are saying, 'do you mind me giving you these' because they are afraid to come near?

That you can bet a million dollars on EVERYONE from all the surrounding tables looking at you once you paid the check, get up and leave (because honestly most of them had not even noticed those dogs under/next to the table, pretending to be awfully well raised and not making one sound).

That you turn completely and utterly bonkers when asked for the 500th time whether that is a wolf (may also substitute that by husky).

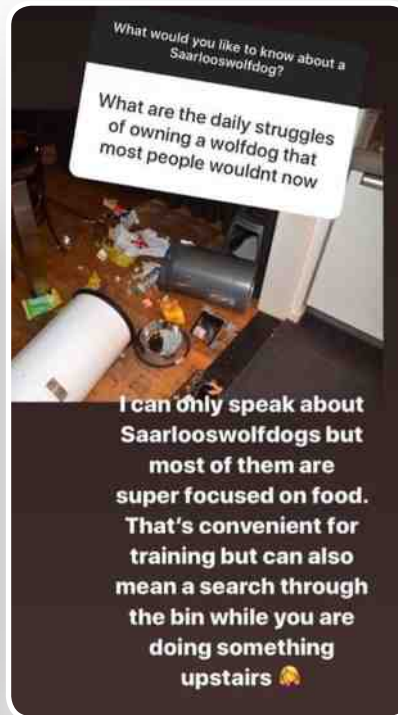
That you seriously threaten to put him on Ebay when he destroyed your one and only laptop cable/remote control/headphones/camera charger cable. That your dogless guests get a heart attack when you 'suddenly' hurl DON'T YOU DARE during dinner. That your kids have started to see this as perfectly normal and guard their plate with spread out elbows.

And it's not as if Saarloos owners make a secret of it or anything. At all! Together you discuss how he can make such a fool of you when he no longer wants to pass that bridge he passed before a zillion times/doesn't want to walk by those flags in the wind/doesn't want to walk period and just sits on his beautiful bum/keeps escaping from his so-called escape-proof harness and then keeps a solid 20 meters distance every time you walk towards him. To only continue discussing how awesome it would be to have a second/third/etc. one!

I can write whatever I want. *You'll go for it anyway.*

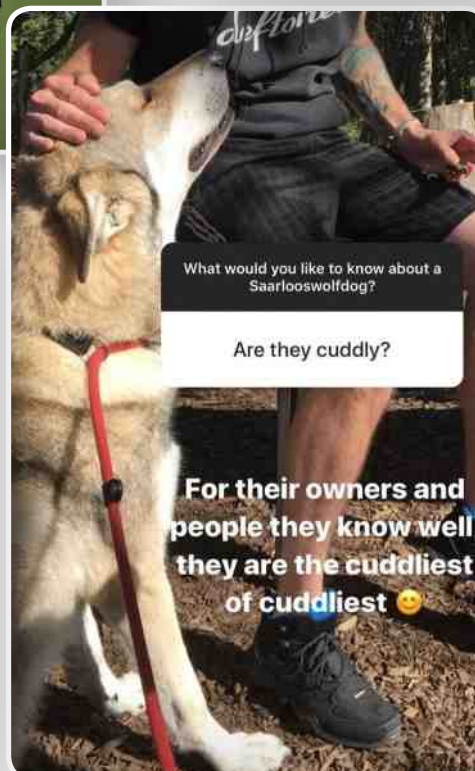


# INSTAGRAM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Someone with common sense, lots of humor (and preferably able to laugh at yourself) and patience.

They often take their time getting house broken (potty trained)- can get real nauseated in cars - and bring their ball back only once 😊 They have a hard time being alone and are real pack dogs so if you work or study away from home fulltime these are probably not the dogs for you



# THERE IS A FIRST TIME...

## FOR EVERYTHING.

A column by: Ineke Pompen

I would not say I was as nervous for my own first time as for Thorgals first time but it was close. Would it work? Would his behavior afterwards be 'worse' ?

After Thorgal was asked as a stud for Gaia, we deliberately planned our holiday earlier so we would be back in time.

Jacqueline (bitch owner) and I laughed. Worst case scenario, we'll be on holiday in Germany and Gaia comes into season way sooner and her progesterone level rises way faster than expected.

You guessed right. Into season months before planned and ready for it within the week. Thank god we had done our tests in time so no worries there, but they were a solid 400 kilometers apart.

We sped home and although they did not really succeed that very day, they did try. However since the vet said it had to be that weekend, the pressure was on. So you do find yourself getting anxious as well.

In his own house things went way better. They mated the next day and the day after.

Having learned it may sometimes take some time before they 'got it', I send my eldest out with the other dog for a long walk, while Etta came by with Winny for Thorgals second love affair.

Sure enough, Etta was just taking her coat off while they were mated.

So, did Thorgals behavior changed in hindsight? Yes it did.

But not because of the mating I think. He became an adult and we had another pup which changed dynamics in the pack.

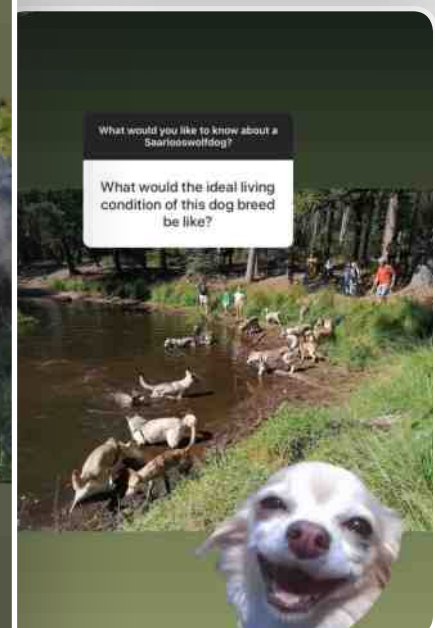
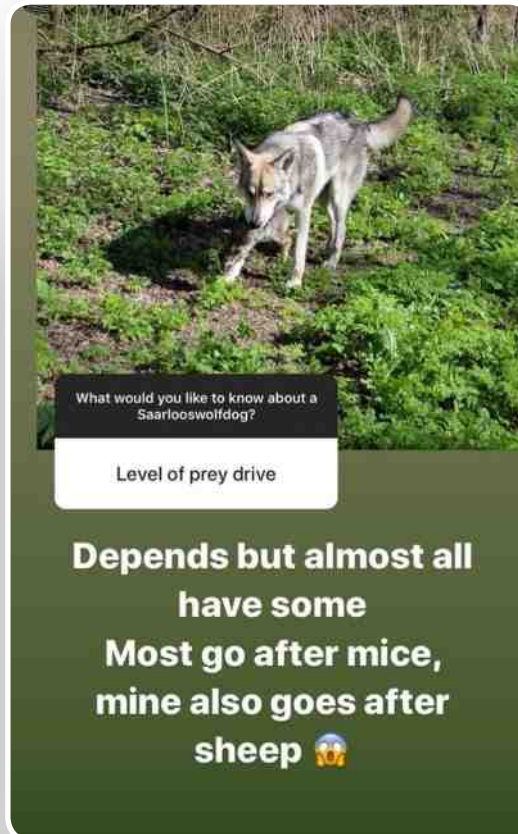
Whether that's the case for all males?  $N = 1$  hardly counts as scientific evidence so quite likely things go differently with other couples or another stud. In the end though, these males have the easy part.

*In a way quite similar too.*



# INSTAGRAM

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



# COLOPHON

## Board

Ineke Pompen, President  
Marianne Eggink, Secretary  
Jan Dirkzwager, Treasurer  
Maria Schipper, Member  
Reinier van Wattum, Member

## Editors

Ineke Pompen  
Johan Berends  
Marianne Eggink  
Hella Liefting (translation)

## Photos

Frits Hess-Busselaar  
Robin van der Molen  
Sylvia Schouwenaars  
Wendy Jonkergouw  
Ineke Pompen  
Jan Dirkzwager  
Lies Geluk  
Raintje Diana Rotsaert  
Johan Berends  
Sandra van Gaalen

## Cover photo

Raintje Diana Rotsaert

## Design

Rowan Hartsuiker ([www.studiocorvus.com](http://www.studiocorvus.com))

## Print

Editoo







## CONTACT US

Jean Sibeliusstraat 33  
3069 MJ Rotterdam  
Nederland

[www.avls.nl](http://www.avls.nl)  
[instagram.com/avls\\_saarlooswolfhonden](https://www.instagram.com/avls_saarlooswolfhonden)  
[facebook.com/saarlooswolfhonden.avls](https://www.facebook.com/saarlooswolfhonden.avls)