

**HEALTH SURVEY SHETLAND SHEEPDOG**  
**YEARS 2002, 2003 and 2004**  
**by the Dutch Sheltie Club (N.S.V.)**

In 1995 the Dutch Sheltie Club (N.S.V.) decided to have a health survey. All owners of Shelties born in 1991, members and non-members of the club, got a questionnaire about the health of their Shelties. Next to health issues also questions were asked about temperament, the breed club and the breeder of the dog. About 400 forms were sent and 223 forms were returned. This is more than 50% of the forms. The survey representative for the breed in that year. No serious health problems and no major temperament problems were found in the breed. CEA and cryptorchidism were the only issues mentioned in substantial numbers.

After this the breed club decided to monitor the health of the breed by publishing a questionnaire in the club magazine every year. The breed club collected since 1998 over a 1100 of these forms. No major problems in the breed were found. The question is: 'are these figures representative for the breed?'

In 2006 the breed club decided to have a big health survey. All owners of Shelties born in 2002, 2003 and 2004 got a health inventory form. We asked a professional research company, Genetic Counselling Services(GCS), to do the survey. GCS made an analysis of the survey and wrote a conclusion with some recommendations for breeding. This report is the basis for the breed policy of the club. The majority of the Sheltie owners (686 from the 724) gave the N.S.V. permission to use the results for a pedigree program. In time we hope to be able to use these results for breed analysis. Over 1300 forms were sent and 57% of the forms were returned. This survey is representative for the breed in these years.

About 85% of the Shelties born in the period 2002 to 2004 came from 'pure' English lines, 10% of mixed American/English lines, 4% of half American/English combinations and 1% were 'pure' American bred Shelties. In the survey general health questions were asked and a second part asked in detail about health issues that were mentioned in the 1100 forms from the breed club.

**Figure: Results detailed breed issues**

Year	Epilepsie		Cryptorchidism		Teethproblems		Collie Eye Anomalie		Total
	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)	number
2002	3	(1,4 ± 1,6)	13	(6,2 ± 3,2)	9	(4,3 ± 2,7)	9	(4,3 ± 2,7)	211
2003	6	(2,2 ± 1,8)	19	(7,1 ± 3,1)	13	(4,9 ± 2,6)	13	(4,9 ± 2,6)	268
2004	4	(1,6 ± 1,6)	12	(4,9 ± 2,7)	7	(2,9 ± 2,1)	12	(4,9 ± 2,7)	245
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>(1,8 ± 1,0)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>(6,1 ± 1,7)</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>(4,0 ± 1,4)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>(4,7 ± 1,5)</b>	<b>724</b>
Year	Cataract		Distichiasis		PRA		Allergy/Atopie		Total
	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)	number
2002	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	9	(4,3 ± 2,7)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	5	(2,4 ± 2,1)	211
2003	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	20	(7,5 ± 3,1)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	2	(0,7 ± 1,0)	268
2004	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	7	(2,9 ± 2,1)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	3	(1,2 ± 1,4)	245
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(0,0 ± 0,0)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>(5,0 ± 1,6)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(0,0 ± 0,0)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>(1,4 ± 0,9)</b>	<b>724</b>
Year	Schilddklier – Hypothy-reoidism		Dermatomyositis DM		SLE		Ectopische uretera		Total
	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)	number
2002	1	(0,5 ± 0,9)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	211
2003	1	(0,4 ± 0,7)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	1	(0,4 ± 0,7)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	268
2004	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	1	(0,4 ± 0,8)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	2	(0,8 ± 1,1)	245
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(0,3 ± 0,4)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(0,1 ± 0,3)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(0,1 ± 0,3)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(0,3 ± 0,4)</b>	<b>724</b>
Year	Patella-luxation		Hidysplasia		Total				
	number	(%)	number	(%)	number	(%)			
2002	1	(0,5 ± 0,9)	1	(0,5 ± 0,9)	211				
2003	3	(1,1 ± 1,3)	3	(1,1 ± 1,3)	268				
2004	2	(0,8 ± 1,1)	0	(0,0 ± 0,0)	245				
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>(0,8 ± 0,7)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(0,6 ± 0,5)</b>	<b>724</b>				

In this health survey no major health problems in the breed were found.

Epilepsy was found in 1,8% of the breed. So Epilepsy is no breed problem but could be a problem of an individual breeder or breed line. That is why the use of the pedigree program is so important. In the future we hope to be able to calculate which combination could be at risk for Epilepsy or any other serious event.

Substantial percentages were found in CEA and distichiasis. The incidence of CEA and distichiasis mentioned by the owners in this survey is a lot lower than we calculated from the official eyecertificates. Probably these issues are not really a problem to the owner. From the official eyecertificates we calculated that about 19% of all Shelties in Holland have CEA and 30% of the adult Shelties have distichiasis.

Due to this high percentage it could be damaging for the entire Sheltie population to exclude all dogs with CEA or distichiasis. Besides that: CEA, and in most cases distichiasis, hardly affects the well being of a dog. So according to the breed policy of the N.S.V. it is permitted to breed with a dog that has CEA or distichiasis; we prefer then the partner to be free of these problems. Since 1976 we notice a reduction in both eye problems.

Eyetestresults from 1976 until 2006

Year	Number of tested Shelties	Percentage CEA/CRD	Percentage coloboma	Percentage distichiasis
1976 (Stades article )	120 adult dogs	48,3 (58,6%)	24	39,2
1989-1995	1336	24,7	?	
1990-1996	1524	20	3,5	
1997-2003	2113	17,5	2,9	
1990-2003	3637	19	3,2	
2004-2006	293 adult dogs			30

Cryptorchidism is mentioned in 6% of the forms, but 50% of the forms is from bitches. The average number of all males that are cryptorchid is 12%. Also cryptorchidism hardly affects the well being of a dog. In Holland you are not allowed to breed with a cryptorchid dog.

Temperament: Nearly all owners were pleased with their Shelties. 74-84% think their Sheltie is sweet, happy and affectionate. Sometimes owners mention nervousness as a problem. 93% of all owners thinks their Sheltie is very obedient.

### **Support for the N.S.V. breed policy**

Although the breed policy of the club is made by the members of the club themselves, it is important for a breed club to know whether the breed policy has really the support from breeders or not. Most Sheltie-owners have given their permission to use the health forms for the pedigree program, so Sheltie-owners support the club. In this survey 46% of the Sheltie-owners is a member of the breed club. Even more important is that nearly all owners of the dogs that were used for breeding are members of the breed club. Nearly all breeders breed according to the clubs breed policy.

Marion ten Cate

Secretary of the Dutch Sheltie Club (N.S.V.) and health committee

The full report of the health survey is published at the site of the Dutch Sheltie Club:

<http://www.nederlandsesheltievereniging.nl/frames/gezondheid/gezondheidframe.htm>  
then go to **gezondheidsonderzoek**