



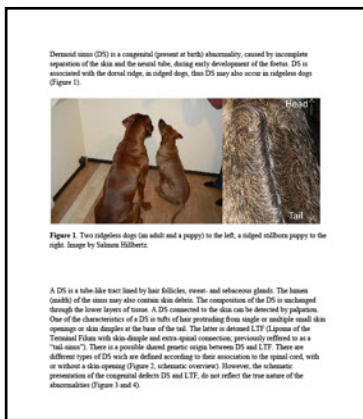
# Guidelines to Ridgeback Health

Copyright © RRCGB

## Fit & Healthy

Ridgebacks are generally fit, active and healthy and live to between 10 and 12 years old, although a few make one or two extra bonus years. The breed is predisposed to a congenital abnormality called Dermoid Sinus, caused by incomplete separation of the skin and neural tube during early development in the sack. (Please see linked article by Dr N Salmon Hillbertz) For more detailed information regarding Dermoid sinus email to: Contact@domestigers.se

## Health Checks



All puppies should be checked by palpation shortly after birth by a knowledgeable, competent breeder or vet – although it has to be said that many veterinary clinics may not have ever had a Ridgeback in their surgery and will therefore never have come across the condition. Checks should be made by 2 different people, and should continue till the puppy goes to its new home.

Sometimes a Dermoid sinus is detected after a puppy has left the breeder. It is expected that breeders will make a financial contribution to treatment in such cases and/or take the puppy back re-imbursing the new owner. The Kennel Club recommend that a *Sale of Puppy Agreement* should be drawn up and signed by both parties before the puppy goes to its new home. Good examples of how to palpate a puppy for Dermoid Sinus can be seen in the RRCGB's **Guide to the Rhodesian Ridgeback**, Chapter X1, p 114 (available from Lynda Fletcher - email kantarisrr@aol.com), and in Ann Woodrow's **Rhodesian Ridgeback** pp156 to 158.

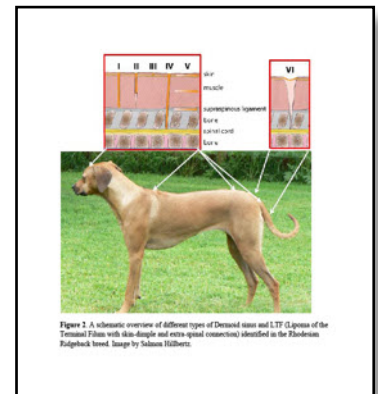
The Club will always assist any breeder to carry out a check.

## Research

At present Dr N Salmon Hillbertz is carrying out research in Sweden to try to develop a Dermoid Sinus DNA test, and the RRCGB are continuing to fund this project.

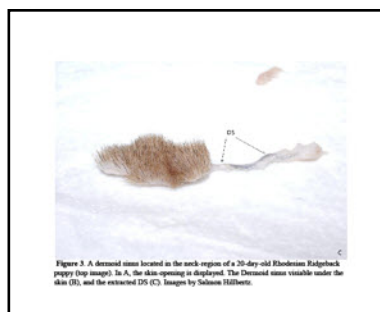
When Dermoid Sinus is detected a decision must be made regarding

suitable treatment. The Club holds a list of vets with experience of this complicated surgery (not usually undertaken until a puppy is about 12 to 14 weeks old). Not every case is suitable for surgery and in such circumstances, the puppy should be humanely put to sleep. Surgery may be lengthy and is usually costly. Vets often recommend neutering a



Dermoid sinus puppy as they should **NEVER** be used in a breeding programme. These puppies should be homed at rearing costs without registration papers and a written agreement that they will be neutered if this have not been carried out.

Like many other breeds, the Ridgeback can be prone to skin conditions which are often well controlled by medication or diet. Alternatively, there are a number of vets and owners who have found natural remedies very helpful. Death from cancer is reported to be the highest incidence in many breeds and the Ridgeback is no exception.



## Hip Scoring:

It is recommended that breeders use the BVA/KC Hip scoring scheme. Information can be found on the following website [www.bva.co.uk/canine\\_health\\_schemes](http://www.bva.co.uk/canine_health_schemes)

Your vet will arrange to take the hip X-rays and send them to the British Veterinary Association for screening, and your dog's result will be included in the KC Breed Records Supplement and printed on litter registration certificates. The minimum (best) score for each hip is 0 and the maximum (worst) is 53

giving a range from 0-106. The average (mean) score for Rhodesian Ridgebacks is 11. Responsible Stud Dog owners should not accept a bitch which has not been hip scored. It is also recommended that breeding and hip scoring stock be identified either by tattoo, microchip or DNA.

## Ridgeless Puppies

Occasionally a ridgeless puppy is born. These puppies should also be placed (not sold) at rearing costs without registration papers, and a written agreement that they will be neutered. This stock does not carry a "ridge gene" and should never be bred from.

A *Breeders Survey (2004-2009) carried in January 2009* showed that, despite the breed having increased numerically, the incidence of Dermoid Sinus has dropped from 4.40% to 2.24% and Ridgelessness from 14.36% to 6.73%

Dermoid Sinus (DS) is a congenital (present at birth) abnormality, caused by incomplete separation of the skin and the neural tube, during early development of the foetus. DS is associated with the dorsal ridge, in ridged dogs, thus DS may also occur in ridgeless dogs (Figure 1).

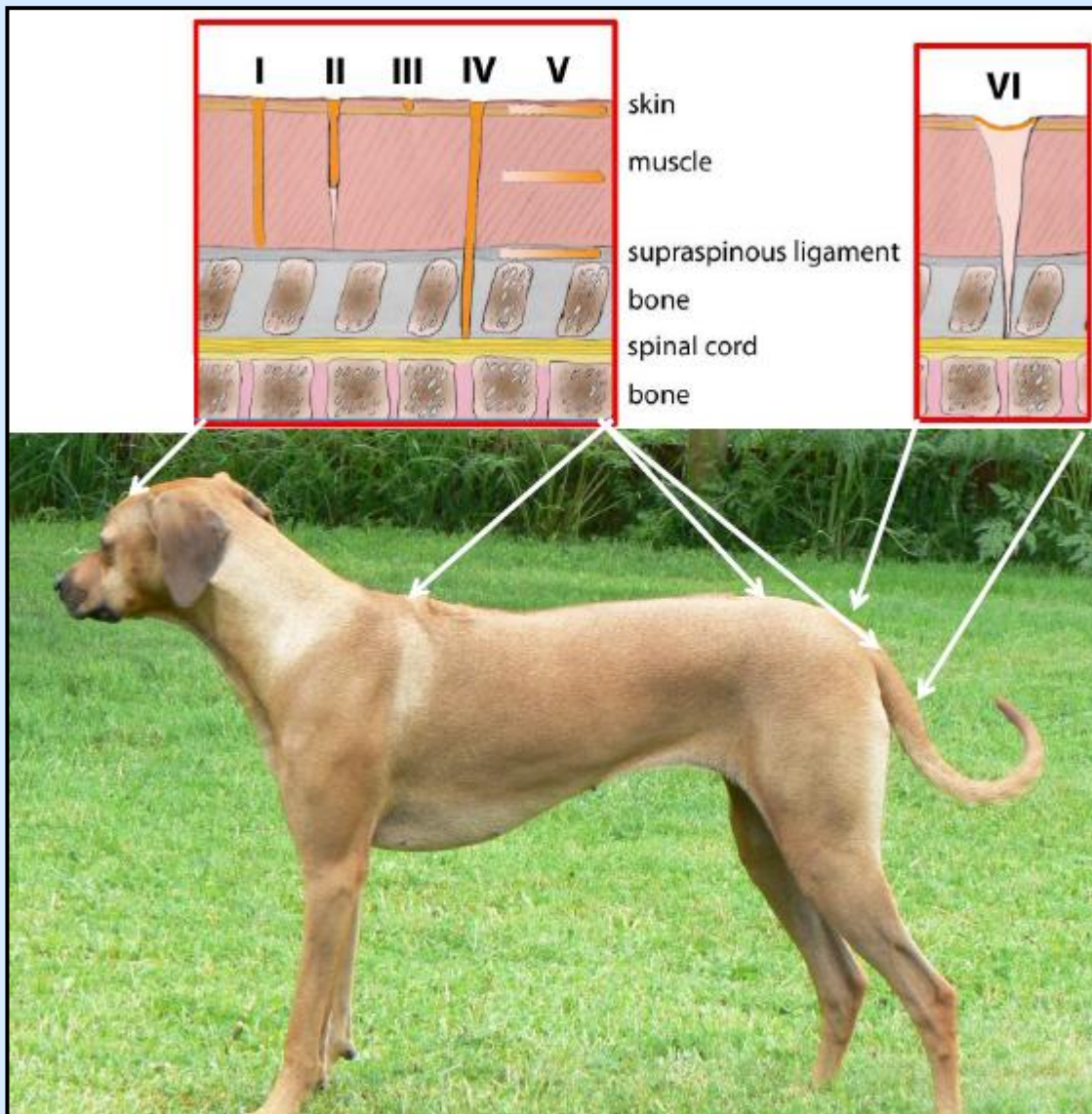


*Figure 1. Two ridgeless dogs (an adult and a puppy) to the left, a ridged stillborn puppy to the right.*

*Image by Salmon Hillbertz.*

A DS is a tube-like tract lined by hair follicles, sweat- and sebaceous glands. The lumen (width) of the sinus may also contain skin debris. The composition of the DS is unchanged through the lower layers of tissue. A DS connected to the skin can be detected by palpation. One of the characteristics of a DS is tufts of hair protruding from single or multiple small skin openings or skin dimples at the base of the tail. The latter is detoned LTF (Lipoma of the Terminal Filum with skin-dimple and extra-spinal connection; previously referred to as a

"tail-sinus"). There is a possible shared genetic origin between DS and LTF. There are different types of DS which are defined according to their association to the spinal cord, with or without a skin-opening (Figure 2, schematic overview). However, the schematic presentation of the congenital defects DS and LTF, do not reflect the true nature of the abnormalities (Figure 3 and 4).



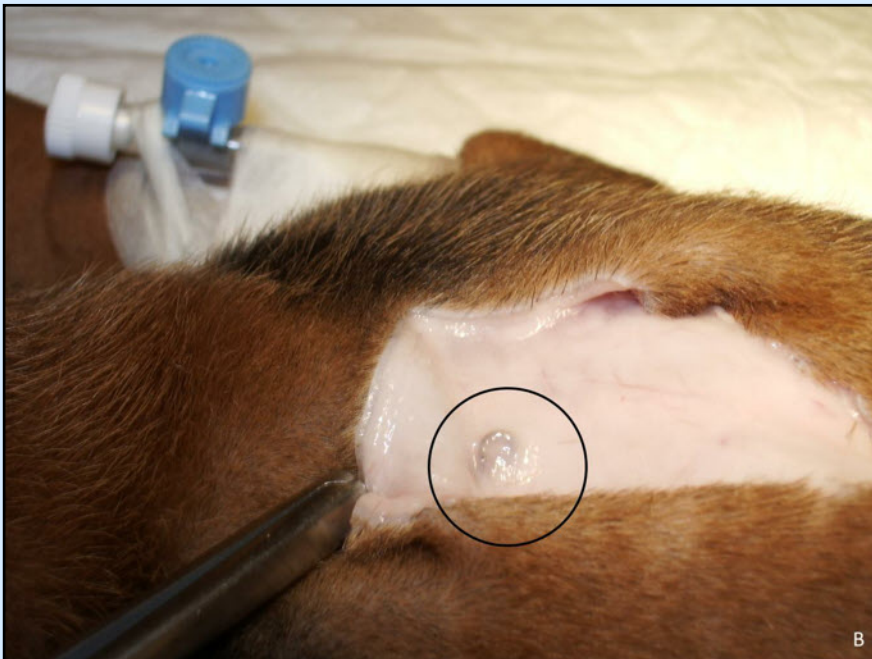
*Figure 2.*

*A schematic overview of different types of Dermoid sinus and LTF (Lipoma of the Terminal Filum with skin-dimple and extra-spinal connection) identified in the Rhodesian Ridgeback breed.*

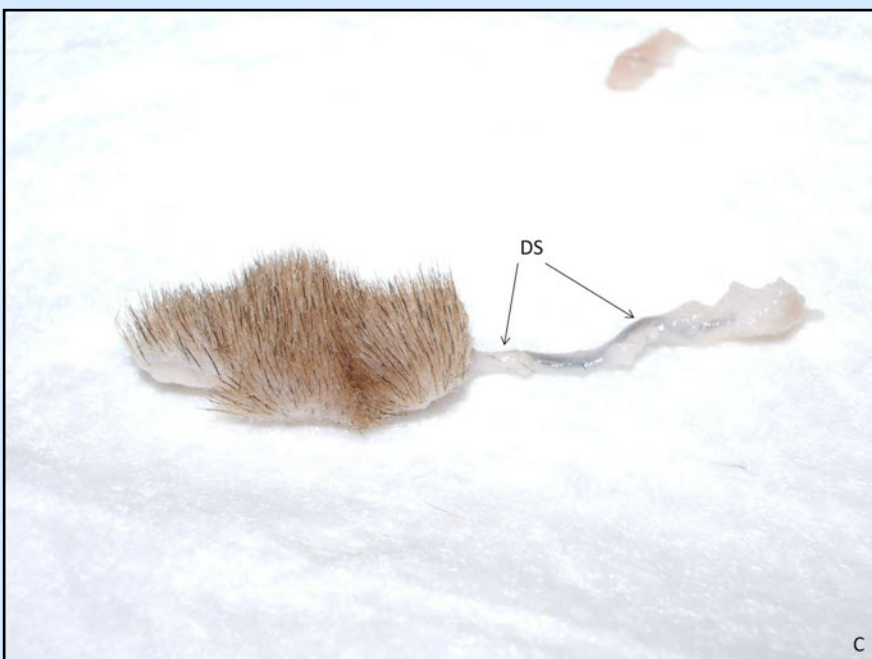
*Image by Salmon Hillbertz.*



A



B



C

**Figure 3.**

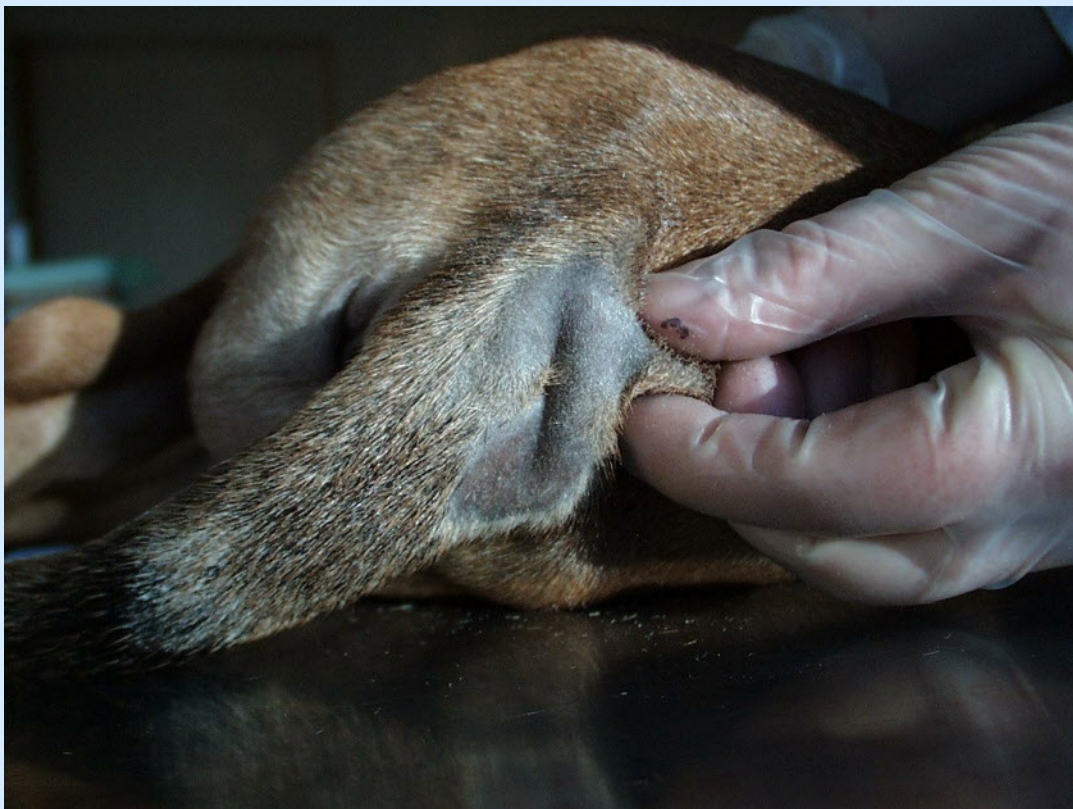
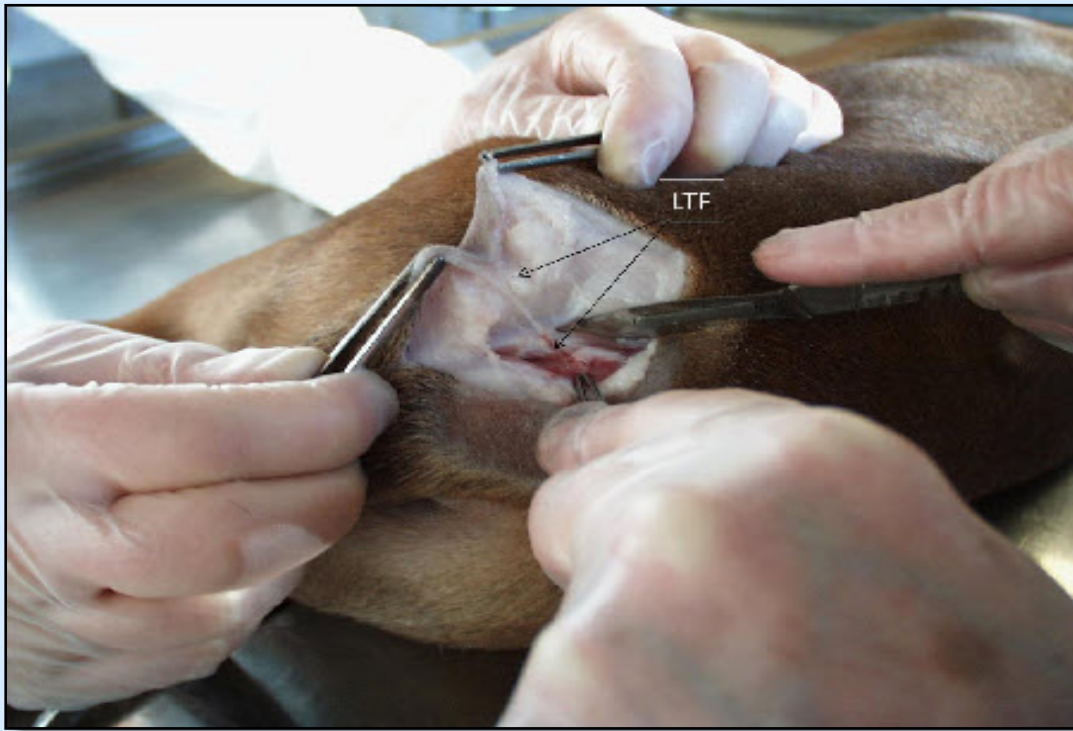
*A dermoid sinus located in the neck-region of a 20-day-old Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy (top image).*

*In A, the skin-opening is displayed.*

*The Dermoid sinus visible under the skin (B),*

*and the extracted DS (C).*

*Images by Salmon Hillbertz.*



**Figure 4.**

*Top image of an LTF (Lipoma of the Terminal Filum with skin-dimple and extra-spinal connection) with the associated skin dimple.*

*Lower image, a displayed LTF.*

*For more detailed information regarding Dermoid sinus go to:*

*Contact@domestigens.se*

*Images by Salmon Hillbertz.*