

Pass notes Dogs● This article is more than **9 months old**

The \$150,000 dog: meet the Svalinn – the gentle beast who can rip out an attacker's throat

They are agile, athletic, even-tempered, intelligent, loving, well-muscled and trained to be lethal bodyguards. The perfect pet, in fact, for a paranoid billionaire



📷 Svalinn dogs are like having 'a gentle Navy Seal in the house'. Photograph: Publicity image

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Name: Svalinn dogs.

Age: Created in the “mid-2000s”, so about 20.

Appearance: Fluffy, yet ferocious.

Svalinn sounds Nordic. What is this? A new Scandinavian gastro-temple? A supermodel? No, in Norse mythology, it's a shield that protected the world, but [New York magazine](#) has been investigating the strange world of the elite “protection” dogs named after it.

Ah, I love dogs, tell me more. Are these fluffy puppies with adorable snoots? Their vibe is more hyper-vigilant stare and rippling muscular physique. Svalinns are “an undisclosed mix of Dutch shepherd, German shepherd, and Belgian Malinois”, created in Montana by breeder Kim Greene.

How am I supposed to portmanteau that? A dugeshebemal? It's hardly “labradoodle”, is it? Hence Svalinn, probably. But there's a lot more to these dogs than the name.

What's so special about them? They're friendly *and* fierce. Svalinns are trained for two to three years to become “beasts that could rip out an attacker's trachea yet also function as pets”. The [Svalinn website](#) describes them as: “A pair of ever-watchful eyes, backed with the decision-making capability and elite training to defend you and your family in a split second.” According to one owner: “I feel like we have a gentle Navy Seal in the house.”

That would be a bit intense when you're chilling on the sofa, watching Gogglebox. What's the point of a dog you can't play with? You can!

Apparently, you instruct them it's playtime, then end the fun by "using the command: 'It's over. Back to your place'".

Yikes. What about belly rubs? Can they shake your hand with their paw? I love that. No information on those, but Svalinns are apparently "agile, athletic, even-tempered, gentle, intelligent, loving and well-muscled".

I bet their paws smell amazing, too. I'm in, where do I get one? You can't. Greene sells only 20 a year after an extensive vetting process. They also cost \$150,000 (£117,000).

Sorry, I thought you said \$150,000. I did.

\$150,000 for a dog? You can get a nice house in Bradford for less than that!

Yes, but will a mid-terrace two-bed offer "instant protection, should you or your family ever be in imminent danger"?

Yes. It's called a "door". Listen, no one is suggesting Svalinn dogs are for everyone. But for the paranoid billionaire who wants peace of mind, perhaps \$150,000 is a small price to pay for an ultra-loyal, highly trained, lethal bodyguard who will also play fetch? You can take your Svalinn everywhere, apparently; they can "fly on private planes" and "sit in on boardroom meetings".

For that price they should fly the plane and chair the meeting. Simultaneously. They probably can.

Do say: "It's like having Jason Bourne and Seth Rogen living in your home in one furry package ..."

Don't say: "... but you have to pick up their poo."

Why you can rely on the Guardian not to bow to Trump - or anyone

I hope you appreciated this article. Before you move on, I wanted to ask whether you could support the Guardian's journalism as we face the unprecedented challenges of covering this administration.

As Trump himself observed: "The first term, everybody was fighting me. In this term, everybody wants to be my friend."

He's not entirely wrong. Already, several large corporate-owned news organizations have settled multimillion-dollar lawsuits with the president in order to protect their business interests. Meanwhile, billionaires have intervened editorially in the news outlets they own to limit potentially unfavorable coverage of the president.

The Guardian is different: we have no interest in being Donald Trump's - or any politician's - friend. Our allegiance as independent journalists is not to those in power but to the public. Whatever happens in the coming months and years, you can rely on the Guardian never to bow down to power, nor back down from truth.

How are we able to stand firm in the face of intimidation and threats? As journalists say: follow the money. The Guardian has neither a self-interested billionaire owner nor profit-seeking corporate henchmen pressuring us to appease the rich and powerful. We are funded by our readers and owned by the Scott Trust - whose only financial obligation is to preserve our journalistic mission in perpetuity.

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With the administration already cracking down on free speech, banning reporters from the Oval Office, and the president and his allies pursuing lawsuits against news outlets whose stories they don't like, it has never been more urgent, or more perilous, to pursue fair, accurate reporting. Can you support the Guardian today?

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