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SHE'S SELLING WEALTHY PEOPLE \$175,000 DOGS. HERE'S WHY THEY COST SO MUCH — AND WHAT THE ADOPTION PROCESS LOOKS LIKE.

Kim Greene reveals what it takes to train dogs that “have better manners than most humans.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Greene didn't want to hire a bodyguard or carry a firearm for protection, so she turned to dogs.
- Neighbors' interest in her canine companions led to the business that would become Svalinn.
- The Montana-based company usually places 18 to 20 dogs per year, but surpassed that with 23 in 2025

As the founder and CEO of elite protection dog company Svalinn, Kim Greene lives and breathes dogs — she typically has about 46 on her Montana property at any given time, in various stages of a rigorous training process.



Image Credit: Courtesy of Svalinn, Kim Greene.

But Greene's journey to Svalinn started more than 8,000 miles away from the ranch, over two decades ago.

In 2005, Greene and her then-husband moved from Afghanistan to Nairobi, Kenya, for her work in policy and his in defense. When Greene learned she was pregnant with twins, she became highly aware of her personal safety and security.

“Anytime you're in a non-permissive environment where there's a massive wealth disparity, people will do what they need to do to survive,” Greene says. “So sometimes if you're of a population that has more resources, you are a target.”

Greene didn't necessarily want to hire a bodyguard or carry a firearm, but she thought that having obedient, ever-present dogs at her side could serve as a strong deterrent to would-be opportunists. So that's what she did.

Before long, neighbors began asking about Greene's dogs and expressing an interest of their own — indicating a demand. So she launched Ridgeback Limited, which sold Rhodesian Ridgebacks for protection. However, those first dogs weren't “foolproof,” and left Greene with the idea to breed her own.



Image Credit: Courtesy of Svalinn

Greene's then-husband had a background in the military, which heavily relies on Shepherds because the breeds are eager to please, want jobs and thrive with structure, the founder says. Ultimately, in 2007, Greene began cross-breeding Dutch Shepherds, German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois to achieve the temperament she sought.

In 2013, Greene moved back to the U.S., first to Wyoming, then, in 2016, to Montana, where she was able to purchase more land and expand the business.

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Svalinn dogs, on average, complete a two-year training program to achieve the desired result: "A thinking, breathing, discerning, obedient dog," Greene says. "A dog that can go with you everywhere. A dog that, frankly, has better manners than most humans."

The business prefers to hire employees who don't have experience training dogs, as Svalinn has a unique approach that can benefit from a "clean slate" when possible, Greene says. However, the founder notes that trainers who have experience working with horses are often adept at training the dogs, having the ability to intuit what an animal might need or do.

A trainer's connection with the animal is of utmost importance, too.

"We're trying to establish rapport with the animal," Greene explains, "and we want the animal doing what we're asking it to do because it has a relationship with us and wants our verbal praise. So the dogs are working for our love, affection and verbal praise, not treats and toys."

People often assume that protection training is first and foremost, but Greene notes that instilling the dogs with foundational obedience and stability "is the premise for everything that we do."

Additionally, Svalinn dogs are trained in hard skills like home searches and obstacle work, and protection scenarios, which necessitate drive-building, bringing out the natural instinct in a dog to use his or her mouth to protect.

“People think, Oh, highly trained protection dog, they’re thinking dog that predominantly uses its mouth,” Greene says. “But in 20 years of this business, one dog has had to deploy to create distance, space and time for its owner to move to safety — one.”

Svalinn exposes dogs to the entire curriculum by about 15 to 18 months of age, but training “can’t force maturity,” which is why the dogs aren’t placed for adoption until they’re at least 2 years old. It currently costs \$175,000 to adopt a Svalinn dog. Naturally, Svalinn customers are of a certain economic status, but contrary to what one might expect, Greene emphasizes that these aren’t people who are immensely fearful or facing death threats: They’re prioritizing peace of mind and a special relationship.

“A lot of people come to us initially justifying the expenditure because of the protection skill set,” Greene says. “But if you were to talk to any one of our canine owners, I think you would hear [about] this total heart connection, this soul connection, this, Oh my gosh, this animal has added so much value to our lives as a whole, and it happens to be a deterrent of a very significant type.”

The price of a Svalinn dog reflects the “very taxing” process of training the dog over two years, and the animal’s

placement, which includes hand-delivery to the owner and five days of bespoke training, all managed by Svalinn’s 13-person team.

“There’s always a little bit of a gamble in the math [of pricing],” Greene admits.

“[During] the years of Covid, when everything went sky high, we were making a lot less per unit. We couldn’t have predicted a global pandemic and how much labor would increase in a calendar year.”

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Image Credit: Courtesy of Svalinn



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well in advance, a year to two years ahead.

The pandemic also shifted the typical adoption timeline, the founder notes. A decade ago, families interested in the dogs generally wanted to know which animals were available for immediate adoption. Now, many potential customers plan adoptions around key life events, such as becoming empty nesters.

“We don’t always have a ton of assets ready to go off the shelf,” Greene says. “Many of our canine owners are thinking well in advance, a year to two years ahead, and getting their name in the hat [to pick from a litter].”



Image Credit: Courtesy of Svalinn

Svalinn placed 23 dogs in 2025 — the most in one year yet. The general “comfort number” tends to fall between 18 and 20, Greene notes.

After adoption, Svalinn remains “a full-stop service provider,” available to pick up and board the dogs if owners have to travel without them, and checking in at least once a year for the duration of the dog’s life.

Protective nature and love are not incongruous.

Sometimes, owners wonder if their dog “still has it” because the animal is so friendly, and the annual protection-scenario run-

through gives them assurance in their investment, Greene says.

“People go, ‘Oh my gosh, wow, she’s better than she’s ever been before,’” the founder explains. “Because both can exist. Protective nature and love are not incongruous. They actually go hand in hand.”

According to Greene, the woman-owned, -operated and -managed Svalinn has found its rhythm, and the founder looks forward to continuing to do what the business does best — fostering a singular connection between people and their dogs.

“The culture of what we do is permeating through everything we do every day,” Greene says, “and it’s so synergistic with where the universe is right now and what people are seeking that I just want to tread water in this time and space and provide as many quality loving animals to people who adore them as we possibly can.”