

Wheels: We have a question from a Volvo owner, “I have a problem with my 1998 Volvo Cross Country Wagon. It has 85,000 miles on it and has been making a loud “clunk” noise when I accelerate in the 40 mph range. It does it once per acceleration and it is loud enough you think you’ve either been hit in the rear or run over something! Once you are above that 35-40 mph and cruising, it doesn’t do it anymore unless you stop or slow almost completely to a stop and then begin accelerating again. It seems to be coming from the rear of the car but the dealer technician said he couldn’t get it to do it for him when he test drove it and they suggested I wait for it to break because they don’t know what it could be! The problem with that is I have an extended warranty that runs out at 93,000 miles and it has been going on now for months, yet the car runs fine otherwise, but I am afraid it will break down on me eventually and it might be somewhere out of town or at night, and what if it causes other damage by breaking? Do you have any ideas what it might be or should I just wait for it to fail like they say? The warranty only covers things that have “mechanical failure” so if it might be something major to repair, I guess that would be best if it breaks before the warranty runs out! Do you have any suggestions for me?”

Halderman: I talked to my Volvo expert and we came up with several possible causes including:

1. The drive shaft spline needs grease.
2. The possibility of a collapsed engine mount that could change the angles of the drive shaft(s).
3. The viscous coupling (this is expensive, but usually fails if the vehicle has been driven with one or more low tires or tires that are not all exactly the same diameter).
4. Unequal tire size. Being all-wheel drive, it is very important that all tires have the same air pressure and tread depth. If one or more of the tires are worn, this can cause driveline vibrations and can cause damage to the viscous coupling.

I suggest you drive the vehicle with the service technician along during the test drive so that you could drive it under the exact conditions to verify the concern. I think that the most likely cause is the tires. Make sure that you check all the tires are the same size, brand, and have the exact same tread depth. With any all-wheel drive vehicle, it is important to replace all the tires, even if only one tire is defective.

