

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Disclaimer:

The information contained within this FAQ document represents the opinions of Dr. and Mrs. Krukenkamp at TNG DOGS. As such, they are representative of breeders/handlers/owners of dalmatians and bull terriers with over 20 years experience breeding, raising, training, and caring for these dogs. This information is NOT to be construed as definitive, authoritative reference material, as may be found in a veterinary or breed standard textbook. We strongly encourage you to consult with your breeder or your veterinarian for questions that you might have regarding your own dog. We offer the material below as representative of our experience, and acknowledge it to be opinion only!

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**Q: What was the dalmatian bred to do?**

**A:** Pictures of spotted dogs (dalmatians) have been found on early egyptian hieroglyphs, always in full stride in a trot or run. The breed was further developed for their natural guarding instinct, and for their inherent ability to work with other trotters (e.g., horses). Although the modern dalmatian rarely runs 25 miles per day, or "coaches" with horse drawn carriages, the breed was developed to perform such functions.

**Q: How long does the dalmatian live?**

**A:** Generally 12 - 15 years, although longer lifespans have been recorded.

**Q: How much exercise does the dalmatian need?**

**A:** The dalmatian is an active dog, and should have access to a large yard to run freely several times per week, or at least should be walked several miles three or four times weekly. A dalmatian that is inadequately exercised will become overweight, hyperactive and unhappy. With this said, each dog is an individual, and we have found that some require much more exercise than others.

**Q: How many spots should a dalmatian have?**

**A:** There are as many opinions about this as there are people in the world! The spots should be between the size of a dime and a half dollar, "pleasingly" distributed over the body of the dalmatian; smaller spots on smaller areas, e.g. legs, tail, etc. The spots should not touch together in large areas of color, nor should there be large areas of white without spotting. Most breeders will look for an even distribution of spots, but many prefer more lightly marked or more heavily marked dogs, according to personal interpretation.

**Q: What is a patch?**

**A:** A patch of color is an area, larger than a spot, that has NO WHITE HAIRS intermingled. A large area of abutting spots is NOT a patch, and can be distinguished because of the presence of intermingled white hair. Patches are apparent at birth, when the newborn puppy has NO spots, is otherwise white in color, but may have a large area of color (i.e., patch). Patches are cosmetic issues ONLY, and do not affect the health, well-being, temperament or longevity of the dog. Breeder's place their patched dalmatians as pets because, if bred into successive generations, patched dalmatians will produce more patches, larger areas of color, until ultimately no spotting will remain. A dalmatian without spotting is NOT a dalmatian.

**Q: What about blue eyes? Are they OK?**

**A:** Blue eye color is sometimes found in one eye, or occasionally in both eyes. As in the discussion of patches, blue eye color has no impact on the health, temperament or longevity of the dalmatian. There is some data from Norway that blue eye color can be associated with hearing deficits in dalmatians, and breeding of such dogs should be avoided. In some countries (e.g., Europe, Scandinavia, etc) blue eye colored dalmatians cannot be exhibited at dog shows, nor bred. In the United States, blue eye color is acceptable both for breeding and showing. The data to date are NOT convincing that this trait has anymore meaning than cosmetic.

**Q: What dog food do you feed, and why?**

**A:** The dalmatian adult should be fed a dog food that has about 21% protein or less. The most important aspect of protein content is to limit the purine fraction within the protein component. The reason for the foregoing is that ALL dalmatians lack uricase enzyme necessary to fully metabolize purine protein fractions, and therefore, ALL dalmatians are prone to an increased urinary urates and stone formation. With this said, we have had excellent luck with the present formulations of PEDIGREE, both puppy chow, and small crunchy bits for adults. NOTE, though, that we use the corn and rice based formula, AND NOT THE PEDIGREE LAMB!!! We have had difficulties with the lamb and rice formulas with urinary blockages. This information may be anecdotal, but we feel strongly that corn based protein source is the best. ALSO, ABSOLUTELY NO TABLE FOOD OR CANNED DOG FOOD should ever be fed to a dalmatian!!!!!!!!!!

**Q: Do dalmatians shed?**

**A:** YES! The dalmatian is a short coated breed, with bristley hair that sheds year round. The dalmatian has no undercoat. Most dal owners resort to once or twice weekly brushing with a soft rubber curry brush to

limit this problem. Most of us acquiesce to using the vacuum cleaner, and to not wearing dark colors around the dogs.

**Q: Why should I have a fenced yard?**

**A:** The dalmatian is very active, on the whole, and enjoys time running and frolicking. A dog left in an unconfined space may wander away from his home, and get into trouble with other dogs in the neighborhood, or worse, be hit by a car or truck! As breeders over the years, we have just heard too many horror stories about loose dogs to make it seem insensible. With this said, some of our owners are meticulous with daily walks in non-fenced areas. We applaud them for their diligence!!

**Q: What is the typical temperament of the dalmatian?**

**A:** This is a bit like asking what is the typical temperament of a human!! On the whole, the dal is best described as a "clown", always at your side, often seeking human body contact, and always looking for some way to get attention and to entertain you. Many of our dogs are couch potatoes who want to be hugged, kissed, fed, and left alone to sleep. Others are rugged outdoorsmen, looking for a lot of play, running and fun! A good breeder will match these temperament characteristics that are often evident even in the whelping box, to the prospective new owner.

**Q: How big will a dalmatian get to be?**

**A:** Females are generally ~40 - 45 pounds, and ~20 - 21" at the shoulder. Males are closer to 55 - 65 pounds, and 22 - 23" tall. There are obviously bigger and smaller dogs, but these are some typical sizes. The AKC characterizes the dalmatian as medium sized.

**Q: What about deafness in dalmatians?**

**A:** Hearing deficits are common in dalmatians. For every ten dalmatians born, typically one will be deaf (no hearing in either ear), and 2-3 will be unilateral (hearing in only one ear). The genetics behind this problem are not definitively proven, but a strong relationship to the gene(s) that control white coat color has been demonstrated. Other breeds, and in fact, other species (e.g. cats) with white coat color exhibit hearing deficits. Although admittedly the subject of great debate, most breeders euthanize deaf dalmatians, as they pose health and safety risks to both themselves and their owners. Unilateral hearing dalmatians ARE HEARING DALMATIANS!! We have trained, raised and loved many "uni's" and believe that they pose no health or safety threat to themselves or their owners. Some breeders adamantly believe that unilateral hearing dalmatians should not be bred. This point, too, is controversial. We believe that a breeding program needs to be established on the entire merit of the dog, and not on one sole trait. In the end, both bilateral and unilateral hearing dalmatians ARE HEARING DALMATIANS, and make wonderful pets and companions!!

**Q: Why do dalmatians make kidney stones?**

**A:** ALL dalmatians lack uricase enzyme, the necessary metabolic component to metabolize purines, which are building blocks to proteins. ALL dalmatians will have some level of urates in their urine as a consequence. When the concentration of urates exceeds a certain level, under certain chemical conditions of pH, etc., then stones will form. To prevent this from happening, a dog food with a low amount of purines and controlled amount of protein should be fed. The dalmatian should be granted liberal access to water. We have found that distilled water, or a water source that is potable with low ion concentration and normalized pH is best.

**Q: What happens if my dalmatian has stones?**

**A:** Stone formation is usually more of a problem in males, because of their long urethra through the penis. Females have a short urethra, and can usually easily pass stones. A dalmatian obstructed with stones will strain at urination, become roachy over the rear, and exhibit pain. The urine may become gritty, foul smelling, and concentrated. This is an EMERGENCY condition that requires IMMEDIATE VETERINARY

evaluation and treatment!! Some dalmatians require a special diet that is VERY low in protein, special water (distilled), and medication to limit urates (allopurinol).

**Q: How do you leash train a puppy?**

**A:** There is no absolute method. We generally place a buckle collar at ~10 weeks of age. The puppy will scratch at this for a few days. Then we hook a leash to the collar, and let the puppy drag this around for a day or two (we don't leave the collar or the leash on at night, or when unsupervised). After a bit, we begin walking with the puppy, holding the leash, letting it go where it wants. Slowly we apply a bit of pressure to encourage the puppy to follow our lead. We NEVER pull and drag the puppy...it won't train the pup to work on lead, and it just might hurt the puppy's neck, if not that important human-canine bond!

**Q: When and how do you housebreak a puppy?**

**A:** There are many answers to this. For those who pick up a puppy at 12 weeks of age and claim that it is perfectly house broken, congratulations! In our experience, a puppy just doesn't get it until about 4-5 months. This is consistent with the development of their neurological system, and bladder/bowel control. Remember, a puppy at 3-4 months is just like an infant...would you expect an infant to control its bowel or bladder, and not mess the diaper? When a younger puppy messes, we do not profoundly scold it, stick its nose in the excrement, or punish the puppy. Frankly, we just clean it up, and move on. The best way to train a puppy to pee and poop outside, is to train its owner to let it outside frequently, particularly after a good drink and after feedings!

**Q: Why spay/neuter? When?**

**A:** This question seems so obvious to breeders, but often is not obvious to new owners. The purpose of spay/neuter is to prevent breeding...simple as that!! For the owner with no experience breeding, an intact dog will have the natural instinct, and the equipment, to mate with other dogs of its breed...or other breeds! If the dog is going to be the family's cherished pet and NOT part of some planned breeding program, there is just NO NEED to keep the animal in tact for the purpose of breeding, period!! We recommend spay/neuter within the first year of life. For a dog, the urethra should be allowed to fully develop, for the purpose of maximizing its size, function, and consistency to permit passage of little crystals/stones. Male dalmatians neutered at very young ages tend to be more prone to urinary obstruction later in life. We recommend that male puppies be neutered at ~12 months of age. For the females, most people do not want to deal with the first season (similar to a "period" in women, but lasting three or more weeks!). We recommend females to be spayed around 6 months of age.

**Q: What does "show/breeding" quality mean?**

**A:** The AKC (American Kennel Club) maintains a so-called breed standard for each registered breed under their auspices. Such standards have generally been developed by national breed clubs like the Dalmatian Club of America, made up of reputable breeders of each breed. The standard is intended to describe the function, structure, health and temperament of dogs typical for the particular breed. Show and breeding quality means a dalmatian that, in our opinion, most closely meets the characteristics and criteria established by the AKC within the dalmatian breed standard.

**Q: Why buy a dalmatian from a breeder, and not the pet store?**

**A:** The dalmatian breeder is generally much more knowledgeable about the breed, the breed standard, the common problems of the breed, and of the lineage of the dogs that were bred. A pet store is, in reality, nothing more than a broker. Most pet stores provide limited return policies, have no knowledge of the lineage of the puppy, and really don't care more than to collect the purchase price. Good breeders will support the puppy for its life time, carefully matching the puppy to its new owners, and guiding the new owners through training, rearing, and solving future problems.

**Q: Are dalmatians good with children?**

**A:** YES!! Despite the adverse publicity about the dal, these dogs when properly bred are wonderful with children! They are active, playful, loyal canines! Children need to be taught how to properly approach a dog...or a dalmatian. The dalmatian temperament is different than the labrador. A small child could pull the tail of a lab, or poke at its eyes, and it would just sit there as if to say, "whatever.....". The same actions to a dalmatian will evoke the response, "hmmmm, why are you poking at my eyes or pulling my tail? Maybe you want to play rough with me like my fellow puppies in the whelping box? This sounds like fun...maybe I'll nip at you like I nipped at my brothers and sisters...and we can really play!" The point is, most dalmatians are wonderful pets with kids and adults alike. BUT, the temperament of a dal is different than a labrador. If you are looking for a brain dead, ever tolerant dog...get the lab! (No offense to our lab friends...they, too, know what we mean!).

**Q: Do we need to do puppy kindergarten?**

**A:** YES!! Puppy kindergarten, or basic obedience training is critically important both for you and your dal. The puppy will learn basic commands such as sit, stay, heel. The pup will also and importantly learn to be with other dogs, and other breeds. The pup will begin to become a good canine citizen, which is critically important in the future. Of equal importance to you both though, is that puppy kindergarten teaches you, the owner, basic skills of interacting with your dog, and a deeper understanding of what motivates or irritates your pup!

**Q: What immunization schedule do you follow?**

**A:** This is an important question, and one that every veterinarian has their own answer. In our own breeding lines, we have found that early immunization against only those things that could kill a puppy (e.g. parvovirus) is necessary. The "puppy shot" that covers everything should not be given until 3 months of age, in our opinion. We do not immunize for leptospirosis until at least 6 months of age, as this immunization tends to make young puppies a bit ill. Of course, don't forget heartworm prophylaxis, which we start at ~3-4 months, and rabies vaccination, which we give at one year.

**Q: What is outcrossing, linebreeding, inbreeding?**

**A:** This question is beyond the scope of most persons, other than dedicated breeders. For general knowledge, outcrossed breedings mean the mating of two individuals who lack common ancestors. For the experienced, it means an inbreeding coefficient (a mathematical representation of gene pool analysis) of less than 10%, i.e. less than 10% common ancestry. Line-breeding means the mating of related individuals in multiple generations, to perfect health, conformation and temperaments. Generally the inbreeding coefficient will be between 10 and 20%. For the dedicated and knowledgeable breeder, an inbreeding (brother-sister, father-daughter, mother-son) firmly establishes type, health and conformation. This is a risky type of breeding that can produce the "best of the best" and/or the "worst of the worst". The inbreeding coefficient in such matings exceeds 20%, and may approach 50%. This is a dangerous type of breeding that should only be attempted by the experienced breeder.

**Q: What does "breeding program" mean?**

**A:** We include this in our FAQ because most breeders, and most dalmatian breeders DO NOT have a breeding program!! This is not to say that such persons don't conduct matings, nor that they don't select to the best of their knowledge. Instead, what we mean by breeding program is that we plan multiple matings over multiple generations into the future, based on our knowledge and on gene pool analysis of the dogs in our pedigrees and in our program at present. The Next Generation, our kennel name, was selected to indicate that our breeding program considers each mating as a stepping stone to future generations, where the breedings of those generations are already planned, of course depending on the individuals that result from a given mating.

**Q: Do dalmatians have skin problems?**

**A:** YES, some do. Under certain climates, at certain times of the year, and under conditions of stress, some dalmatians develop a sort of dermatitis, evident as bronze or red bumps in the skin under the coat. Some breeding lines have a greater tendency for this problem than others. We have found, in our experience, that when this problem begins to occur, that treatment with Cephalexin (Keflex) 500mg 3x or 4x per day "nips it in the bud">

**Q: What about fleas and ticks?**

**A:** We have come to peace on this issue! We do not use flea collars, as we house several dogs that run in a pack. A flea collar is great fun to rip off your buddy and chew up! Instead we add garlic and brewer's yeast to the food each day, and this seems to prevent any fleas! We live in a heavily wooded area, and just accept that ticks will get on the dogs. In peak season (generally May, June), we inspect the dogs daily and just pull the ticks off.

**Q: What grooming is necessary?**

**A:** A good brushing with a soft rubber curry brush will limit shedding. This should be done once or twice weekly. The toe nails should be clipped (or ground) to the wick once per week, to maintain nicely arched toes necessary for coaching. Dals are usually very clean, and need a bath only occasionally. We avoid most soap products, as they can irritate the skin. We prefer to use a mild soap, if needed, like Ivory.

**Q: What about crating?**

**A:** Many people feel uncomfortable about putting their dog in a "cage" like a wild animal. We feel exactly the opposite! The crate (wire or plastic) allows the dog a place of its own. Most dogs have a strong "den instinct", and actually enjoy having a small, dark, confined place of their own. The crate is a place that no dog can chew up the furniture, bite unsuspecting visitors, or pee/poop on the oriental carpets! The crate is wonderful at night time, in this regard. And, of course, if you need to travel, the crate is great for transport by car, air or train. We have crated our dogs for multiple generations and not seen a single problem in health, temperament, or longevity using this technique. AND, our dogs have truly benefitted from having their own place where they cannot destroy the rest of the environment, and where they cannot get into trouble with others....human or canine!

**Q: What do all of those CH titles mean?**

**A:** Generally, the CH titles indicate "Champion", where the dog has been exhibited at dog shows for the purpose of earning such titles, judged by many judges considered experts in the breed, and awarded championship points based on evaluations of conformation, movement and temperament. The AKC, American Kennel Club, offers such accreditation, as well as FCI, the international equivalent to AKC. It is actually quite difficult to achieve CH titles, and as such they generally indicate a dog of great quality, meeting the standard of excellence for the breed. As an example, there are about 40,000 dalmatians newly registered with the AKC annually, and only about 200 new Championships finished annually, i.e., less than 1% of dalmatians produced in the US finish their championships annually!!