



## **So – you think you want a Dalmatian?**

Dalmatians are wonderful dogs. They are very loyal to their owners, friendly and inclined to be clowns much of the time. They are also very energetic, very playful, and very intelligent.

For the truly dedicated and well prepared dog owner, the Dal can be a gift straight from heaven. To the novice or first-time dog owner, who does not have a clear understanding of the breed, the Dalmatian can be the worst kind of nightmare.

In earlier times, Dalmatians were used to guard stables and fire houses. They were also bred to run with coaches and horses all day. This required an extremely high energy level, which, to this day, makes the Dal an exuberant, vibrant and energetic animal that requires lots of exercise. Without this very necessary exercise, they can become bored and destructive. They are also extremely intelligent dogs and need continuous stimulation and challenge. Otherwise, they will invent their own entertainment and this may not be what you would have chosen.

**The following questions were developed to help you decide if a Dal will serve your needs. As you answer these questions, keep in mind the following pertinent information about the Dalmatian.**

1. They have endless energy; they are boisterous and sometimes they even have rowdy behavior, especially during their growing years.
2. They are independent thinkers; they are very smart dogs that become easily bored.
3. Their weight can be anywhere from 50-80 lbs.
4. They are challenging dogs that require lots of input from their owners.

### **Do you have a fenced yard?**

Dalmatians are housedogs and they thrive best when they have a one on one relationship with their owners. However, they will not be able to live successfully and comfortably in the house without a fenced yard in which to run off all that built up energy. Many people, who try to raise Dalmatians without a fenced yard, find that they usually have one of three things happen:

1. A completely destroyed house.
2. The family is searching for a new home for the dog by the age of 6-9 months of age, after the dog has destroyed the house.
3. The owners and the dog are constantly at odds with each other. This is an unhealthy situation for all parties, including the dog.

Here are a couple other things you should consider here:

1. Do you really LIKE walking in the snow/rain at 5:00am for morning “potty” duties?
2. Without a fence, are you willing to risk the heartbreak of having your dog stolen, or perhaps wandering off and getting lost or hit by a car?
3. Leaving a dog out on a chain is inhumane because the dog cannot get enough exercise. He or she develops the bad habit of barking or digging constantly and is unprotected from other animals and humans who do not mean well.

### **Do you have time for a Dalmatian?**

Dalmatians require a lot of time and input from their owners, especially during the growth years. It’s okay if the adult members of the household work provided there is plenty of time for the Dal in the evenings. With Dalmatians, it just isn’t fair or practical to leave the dog alone all day and then be gone every evening at other activities. In these circumstances, because of the high activity and intelligence level, the Dal will become bored, lonely, and very quickly, destructive.

### **Do you have children under the age of 5 years?**

This is a very important consideration for parents, especially Mom, who, even in these days of liberation, is still the one who is primarily responsible for the care of the household. A lively, boisterous, growing Dal puppy can be devastating to the young child when he or she is knocked over for the umpteenth time. Small children require a great deal of time and so does the growing Dal puppy. This is a combo, which can be very hard on Mom. Think about it! Did you plan to have TWO children at the same time, or just ONE?

### **Do all family members want a large dog?**

It seems like this should be an obvious thing but sometimes it isn’t. A very common reason for wanting a Dal is “My kids/husband just love the movie and the whole house is decorated in 101/102 Dalmatians stuff.” In reality, however, when confronted with a normal, active boisterous Dal, the kids are very often overwhelmed and not comfortable at all. The reality is that a LIVE, breathing Dalmatian, unlike the pups in the movie, DOES grow up, DOES NOT talk and IS a lot of work.

## **Where do you live?**

*This is a biggy.* If you own your own home, you need read no further. If, on the other hand, you rent, share, or live with your parents, we'd like you to consider some things, which may not have occurred to you:

1. If you rent/share and your landlord/roommate approves of the dog, that's great. But, what will happen when you move and discover that most places do not accept dogs over the weight of 35 lbs. And the rent for the few that do accept big dogs is much more than you can afford?
2. If you live at home with your parents then it is the parent who takes care of the house who must be involved in the decision to adopt a Dal – right down to having an understanding of what is the breed is like. Chances are you will be gone during the day, to work or to school, and gone many evenings to school, on dates, or other social events. Someone has to be responsible for raising that puppy or caring for the needs of the dog.

## **Do you or anyone in your family have allergies?**

Dalmatians shed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.... Enough said!

## **I really want a Dalmatian! Why should I consider any of this?**

1. A dog is a living being and does not deserve the things that can happen when put in the wrong kind of home.
2. You are about to make a huge investment of money, time and love and you will not be able to recover any of that when things go wrong.
3. The rescuer works very hard and spends a lot of time with both cooperative and un-cooperative shelters to save the dogs, not to mention the amount of money each rescuer spends to “bail” the dogs out and then have them spayed or neutered and up to date on all shots. They want them to go to homes where they will stay for the rest of their lives.

## **In closing...**

The Dal is not the right pet for everyone and it is hoped that the questions raised in this pamphlet will help those considering the breed reach the right decision. In this modern world, where very few of us have horses, carriages or stables to guard, it is necessary to consider very carefully just what we expect a Dalmatian, or any dog, to fit into our lives. Without this forethought, we are not being fair to ourselves, our family or the dog. You have done all the research, found tons of information about Dalmatians and you know you want to share your home with a “spotted friend.” But sometimes a puppy just won't fit your needs. As already pointed out, it's next to impossible to raise a puppy without a fenced yard. Puppies are very often too much for young children and many of the moms of the world do not want to raise another “child.” So what do you do?

# ADULT DOG TO THE RESCUE

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It isn't as hard as you might think to adopt an adult dog, and an adult dog does not present half of the problems of a puppy. Most adults are through the more difficult puppy stages and make wonderful companions. These dogs can range in age from older puppies (around 1 yr of age) all the way up to "Tommy" the 14 yr old dog that needed a home after he was dumped in a local shelter. You can read his story (and others) at [www.dogsaver.org/willinghearts](http://www.dogsaver.org/willinghearts).

The circumstances under which an older dog may be looking for a new home are as many and varied as the number of dogs who need homes, here are just a few:

1. Sometimes a breeder has finished a championship dog and feels that the dog will benefit from living as the pampered pet of a special family
2. Sometimes a breeder has kept a promising dog to show and that potential does not develop to its fullest extent. Once again, the breeder will feel that it's fair to find him or her a special place.
3. Dogs end up in shelters or returned to breeders because people get divorced, they become ill, or the owner simply passes away.
4. People don't research the breed and find that they haven't chosen the right dog for their lifestyle.
5. People move.

The trick when considering an adult dog is to work through a rescue group that will adopt the correct dog for your particular lifestyle. You may be asked many different kinds of questions about your home & lifestyle. These questions are not designed to annoy you but to assure that you and your adopted dog are compatible. It may help you to know that the same kind of questions and information are gathered about the dog that needs a new home (if possible). As an example of matching dogs and their new families, it would be logical to place a dog that is comfortable with young children in a home where young children live or visit regularly. Likewise a dog that is used to living with other critters will probably adjust more easily in a home where cats and other animals are a part of the family.

To see the Dalmatians that currently seeking loving homes, please visit our web site at [www.dogsaver.org/willinghearts](http://www.dogsaver.org/willinghearts) - You just might find your new best friend!