

# Looking for a Playful, Loyal Running Buddy That Will Guard You Too?

If you love running, biking, and the great outdoors, you're sure to love this popular canine that'll jump at the chance to engage with you in all your favorites. What's more, she'll protect you too, with her guard dog instincts. But there are a couple of caveats.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dalmatians are one of the most easy-to-spot dogs, with wonderful traits such as intelligence, sociability, playfulness, and loyalty
- Dalmatians require not only physical stimulation but mental as well. They aren't good lapdogs, usually, but instead enjoy life on the go, and love to be running outdoors
- They require a firm, gentle hand when training, but this breed is famous for being an excellent watch dog, as well as the archetypal fire department mascot
- An enlarged heart and congenital conditions that include missing skin pigmentation and deafness are a few of the disorders you should be aware of before choosing a Dalmatian as a pet
- If your Dalmatian is hard of hearing, remember: She's deaf — not dumb

**Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published November 15, 2017.**

Intelligent, beautiful and always up for a good, long run, there are many reasons to love the Dalmatian breed. Additionally, they're sociable and obedient (with proper training), and fun to be around. Said to make excellent watch dogs, these easy-to-spot canines are also famous for being fire department mascots.

Dalmatians require not only physical stimulation but mental as well. They aren't good lapdogs, usually, but instead enjoy life on the go, and love to be running outdoors. In fact, they require plenty of active play to be happy. One of the advantages with this breed is that they're naturally fastidious, but with an important caveat, as DalmatianBreed reports:

*"These dogs are very good at keeping themselves clean. They tend not to smell as bad as other breeds. They do shed year round, but that's expected with any dog. So when it comes to grooming, they are relatively easy to take care of — as long as you invest in plenty of lint rollers."<sup>1</sup>*

Prospective Dalmatian owners should also be aware that this breed comes with the possibility of several medical issues. A book titled "Genetic & Behavioral Risk Factors of Dalmatians,"<sup>2</sup> by Dr. Ross Clark inspired the following list on DVM360.<sup>3</sup>

## 5 Dalmatian Health Risks to Watch Out For

### 1. **Dalmatians have a high rate of deafness**



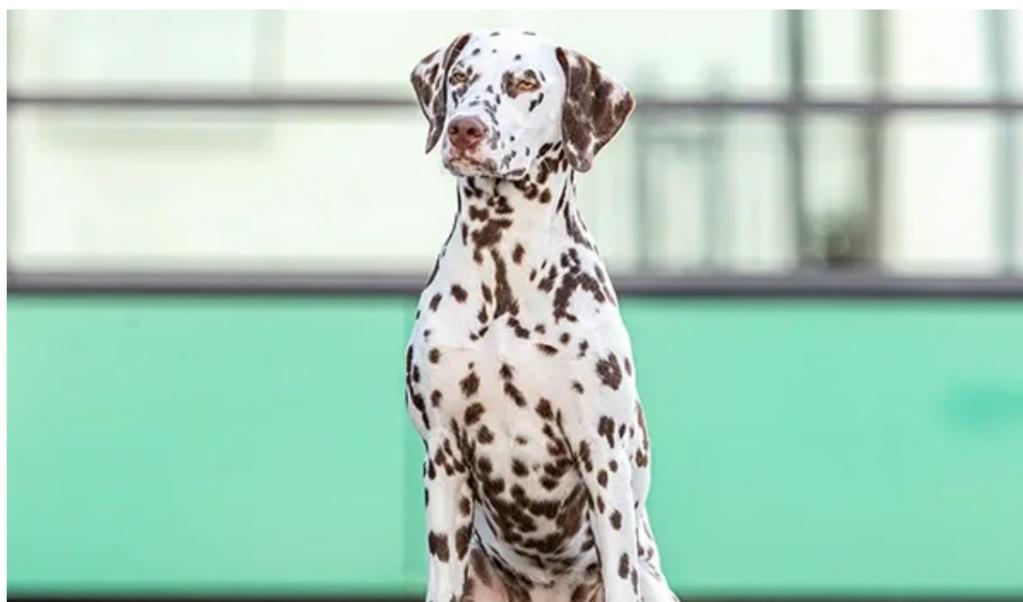
Of all the dog breeds on the planet, this one is known as being most prone to deafness, a congenital condition. In fact, about 30% of Dalmatians are deaf in one ear or even both, known as bilateral or unilateral deafness. That said, if your Dalmatian is hard of hearing, remember: She's deaf — not dumb. Training deaf dogs takes a little more work but can be infinitely rewarding.

### 2. **They can have a big heart**



Dalmatians often have a disorder known as ventricular enlargement, aka an enlarged heart. Associated problems include dilated cardiomyopathy, a disease evidenced by a heart muscle that gradually becomes thin and stretched and therefore pumps inefficiently.

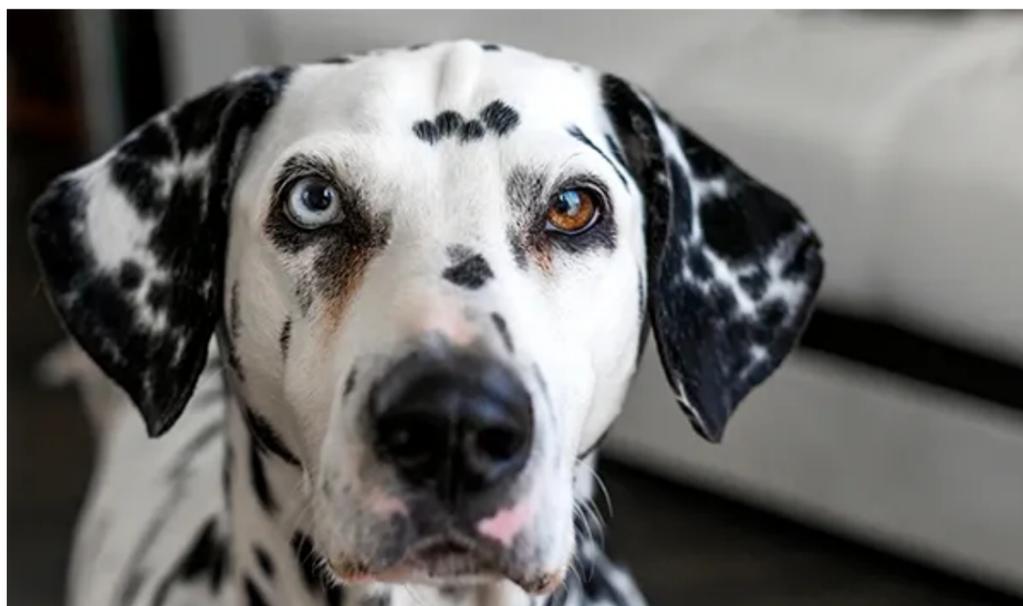
### 3. **Bronzed fur**



Known as a syndrome, Dalmatians whose fur takes on a bronze tinge were once thought to have an irregularity in uric acid metabolism. Today, however, dermatologists believe it to be allergic dermatitis, an infection that causes the white portions of dogs' fur to become a deep pink or bronze shade. The Dalmatian Club of America (DCA)<sup>4</sup> explains that this syndrome is accompanied by:

- Bumps at the hair follicles
- Inflammation caused by a secondary infection called superficial pyoderma of the *Staphylococcus intermedius*, a normal bacterial flora on dogs' skin
- Intense itching
- Hair loss (alopecia)
- Remaining hairs turn red due to stained pigments called porphyrins

#### 4. **Waardenburg-klein syndrome**



This genetic disorder in Dalmatians affects their pigmentation, evidenced by dogs having pale, usually blue, eyes, and often two different colors, called heterochromia irides (or heterochromia iridum).

Accompanying this is amelanotic skin, meaning the dogs' skin isn't pigmented. This skin abnormality coupled with decreased fur increases their risk of a bad sunburn. Dalmatians subjected to sunlight repeatedly and for prolonged periods can thicken their skin and, ultimately, cause oozing, crusting skin ulcers, a forerunner of squamous cell carcinomas.

#### 5. **Urate uroliths (bladder stones)**



This condition is associated with the same genetic predisposition of the absence of white hairs in spots. However, dogs with this "high urate excretion" are often chosen to breed with Dalmatians with lots of dark spots.

A common treatment for these bladder stones is removing them surgically, if warranted. Increased water consumption is recommended for these dogs while you also remain vigilant for urinary tract infections. Feeding them a low-purine diet may help keep them from developing bladder stones, according to the Whole Dog Journal.<sup>5</sup>

*"The culprits in urate stone formation are purines, a type of organic base found in the nucleotides and nucleic acids of plant and animal tissue.<sup>6</sup> As dietary purines degrade, they form uric acid, which is best known in human medicine for its connection to gout, a sharply painful form of arthritis. In susceptible dogs, purines trigger the formation of urate uroliths."*

Feed a lower-purine, moisture-rich alkalizing diet for these dogs. This can be accomplished most successfully by working with a vet that is well versed in customized diet formulations and can provide recipes that meets these goals.

Most importantly, completing regular rechecks to make sure the bladder stone is dissolving with dietary intervention is important. Checking your dog's urine pH at home (first thing in the morning before meals) can also help ensure you're keeping your dog's urine in the optimal range during treatment.

## Dalmatians

DalPal<sup>7</sup> mentions that this breed can weigh 50 to 70 pounds full grown and has a tail that can clear a coffee table in five seconds! People who live with Dalmatians report them to be patient and loving, but if you have a family with children under age 5, be aware that many dog experts caution against choosing a Dalmatian as a pet.

On the plus side, these pups are people oriented, quick learners, love going along on your bike rides and daily jog and are very loyal. According to Dog Breeds, Dalmatians have a life expectancy of 12 to 14 years of age. If you choose this type of dog, there are many rescue groups across the U.S. with Dalmatians ready to adopt.<sup>8</sup>

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [DalmatianBreed 2016 \(Archived\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Amazon 1996-2016](#)

<sup>3</sup> [dvm360 2016 \(Archived\)](#).

<sup>4</sup> [The Dalmatian Club of America February 23, 1999 \(Archived\)](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Whole Dog Journal, October 28, 2019](#)

<sup>6</sup> [FoodHealth.info, Purines \(Archived\)](#).

<sup>7</sup> [DalPal](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Dog Breeds 2016](#)

---