

Should I breed my Dalmatian?

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred (or maybe nine hundred ninety-nine times out of a thousand) the answer to the question is NO! The Dalmatian breed is currently a victim of its own popularity. Rescue groups are overwhelmed with homeless dogs. Many of these homeless dogs are young puppies bred by novice or backyard breeders who now cannot find buyers for them. Irresponsible breeders produce dogs and then refuse to take any further responsibility for their well-being. Read the open letter to a BYB written after a rescue dog had to be euthanized.

If you are thinking about breeding, please consider the following:

- **QUALITY** - Be sure your Dalmatian is a good example of the breed. This is usually done by having success in the show ring. Novice owners are rarely able to objectively evaluate their dogs. Contact a thoroughly experienced breeder/exhibitor for help in evaluating your dog. Your vet can evaluate your Dalmatian's health but unless he is an experienced Dalmatian breeder/exhibitor he cannot evaluate quality. You must be aware of your dog's strengths and weaknesses. For example, if your bitch has a dippy top line you need to breed to a male who has a good top line and can reproduce it.
- **HEALTH** - Be sure your Dalmatian has had all applicable health clearances. This should include BAER testing for hearing, OFA or PennHIP certification that the dog is free of hip dysplasia, OFA clearance for elbows, CERF clearance for eye problems including the test for iris hypoplasia, and thyroid test to be sure thyroid gland is functioning properly. Additionally the dog should show no evidence of severe allergies, stone-forming, or seizures. Both sire and dam should also be tested for brucellosis. There is no excuse for not doing clearances. If you think the clearances are too expensive then you should not breed.
- **TEMPERAMENT** - Any Dalmatian intended for breeding should have flawless temperament. If your dog has bitten someone, has to be kept away from children, is unpredictable with strangers, will go after another dog, is shy, aggressive, nervous, or high strung, then spay or neuter. Adults with poor temperament produce puppies with poor temperaments.
- **PEDIGREE** - What do you know about your dog's ancestors? You should find out as much as possible regarding quality, health, temperament, etc, about each of the dogs in at least a four generation pedigree. If you cannot get the information, don't breed.
- **KNOWLEDGE** - Do you know anything about breeding? It is much more than turning a dog and a bitch out in the backyard and letting nature take its course. Breedings do not always go well. The bitch may turn on the male and try to rip his head off. Anyone in her way may also get attacked. How much do you know about whelping and raising puppies? Can you recognize a potential whelping problem? Do you know how to care for a bitch and newborns? Will you be able to properly socialize them? Can you offer appropriate training and problem solving advice to puppy buyers? If not, don't breed.
- **TIME** - Raising a litter of puppies is time consuming. Plan to have an adult with the bitch 24 hours a day for at least 5 days before her due date and for five days after the puppies are born. Many responsible breeders whelp the puppies in their bedrooms or sleep on a cot next to the whelping box. For the first two or three weeks the bitch will do most of the work but you still have to weight them, do neuro-muscular stimulation exercises, clean the whelping box, and cater to the bitch's every need and whim. After that it is up to you. Puppies are messy. You will need to clean the whelping box and the puppies several times a day. Stock up on newspaper. You will need a mountain of it. You will also need time to housebreak and obedience train any puppies that are not sold immediately. The older they get the more time you will need to spend with them. A wild, ill-mannered "teenager" is not a saleable item.

- **EXPENSE** - Expect to put out a lot of money before seeing any income (if you do see any income). Health tests will run several hundred dollars and up. Smears and progesterone testing to see when the bitch will be ready can add a couple hundred more. Expect to spend several hundred more if you do chilled semen or have to ship the bitch to the stud dog. Extra food of a premium brand, puppy shots, hearing tests, wormings, etc. will add hundreds more. You may also spend a fortune on advertising as novice breeders rarely have buyers beating a pathway to their door. You may be keeping some of the puppies for months until buyers can be found. Reputable breeders usually consider a breeding successful if they got the puppy they were hoping for and didn't lose too much on the rest of the litter. Breeding is a labor of love not a business.
- **RESPONSIBILITY** - Are you willing to be responsible for the welfare of these puppies throughout their entire lives? If an owner cannot keep one of them, will you take the responsibility for finding a suitable home? If half of your puppies came back to you do you have enough room to care for them until suitable homes can be found? If not, don't breed. Read the article on [Selecting A Breeder](http://dalmatians.us/breeder.htm). <http://dalmatians.us/breeder.htm> Do you fit the description of a responsible breeder? If not, you should not breed.
- **LOVING COMPANION** – And last but not least, be aware that things can go sideways very quickly. You claim you **absolutely** love your beloved companion so are you willing to risk losing her to complications during pregnancy and/or whelping? And if you lose her, are you financially, mentally and physically able to raise and care for her puppies? Think really hard on this topic. You may be setting your bitch up to a painful and unnecessary death.

The owners of irresponsibly used stud dogs can cause even more damage to the breed. A stud dog can sire an awful lot of puppies in his lifetime. It is the quality of the offspring not the quantity that matters. Even a top winning show dog may not be the right stud dog for a given bitch. Are you able to honestly evaluate your dog's strengths and weaknesses and turn down breedings because they are not ideal? The owner of the stud dog is just as responsible for the welfare of the puppies as is the owner of the bitch. If the bitch owner cannot place the puppies are you willing to take the responsibility or will your dog's offspring be put to death at the shelter? Two years from now when an owner cannot keep one of the pups will you take it in? If you are not willing to provide a home for your stud dog's progeny then neuter him and leave breeding to responsible people.

I cannot overemphasize the problem of homeless Dalmatians. Unless you have an outstanding dog with flawless temperament and all health clearances and are willing to be responsible for the puppies ad infinitum, PLEASE DON'T BREED!