

Is a Dalmatian Right for You?

There's nothing cuter than a Dalmatian pup, except perhaps two Dalmatian pups! The adult Dalmatian is a handsome, stylish dog that is sure to attract attention wherever he goes. If you're thinking of buying a Dal, please take the time to consider all aspects of that decision. Each breed has its good and bad points, and no one breed is perfect for all situations. You must pick the breed that has the right characteristics to fit your needs and your lifestyle, then raise and train the dog correctly. Dogs don't just grow up to be great family companions. They require much time and effort on your part, as well as lots of patience. Think it over carefully.

Dals DO Shed, as do all smooth-coated breeds. Dal hair is stiff and abundant and will work its way into the fabric. Although it's easy to sweep or vacuum, Dal's hair is hard to brush off. If you're bothered by dog hair, the need to groom a dog regularly, or the necessity of extra sweeping or vacuuming, you'll probably be unhappy with a Dalmatian. Shedding is heaviest in the spring and fall, but there are some loose hairs year around. Also, if there are allergies in your family, a shedding breed like the Dalmatian can be a serious problem.

Dals ARE Active, especially during puppyhood (which can last until 18 months or more). You will need a fenced yard or the time and energy to take the dog for regular walks. A Dal that is confined too much or that receives too little exercise may become noisy and destructive. They should never be allowed to run free without supervision. Dals need to be a part of the family, require lots of time and attention and do not do well kept outdoors and away from the family. They should always be house dogs.

Dals Are Basically a Guard Dog Breed and need to be raised with firmness and discipline. Although they are related to pointers, Dals were originally guard dogs in the stables and ran with horse-drawn carriages to protect them from stray dogs and highwaymen. ALL Dals need basic obedience training, and they need to know the rules of the household from the very beginning. If you are unwilling or unable to function as a "pack leader," your Dal will quickly step in and assume the role. Dals are smart and stubborn and quickly learn what they can get away with. This can be a very dominant breed, and permissively raised Dalmatians often become problem dogs.

Dals Are Clowns and can be exasperating. You **MUST** have a sense of humor to enjoy living with a Dalmatian. Adolescent Dals are particularly trying.

On the Positive Side, Dals are delightful and intelligent companions, VERY affectionate, excellent family dogs if raised properly, clean in the house, have very little doggy odor, and are generally quite easy to house train. They are not normally barkers but are good watchdogs. They are easy-keepers, not expensive to feed, generally healthy, and easy to keep neat and clean. They love to ride in the car, run with horses, bikes, or joggers, and often love to swim. They have enormous amounts of energy and endless enthusiasm and will play with the kids for hours. They can be taught to hunt game birds and make excellent ratters. Most Dals are quite sensitive to human moods and will do their best to cheer up gloomy human friends. They can be great fun for the entire family, but they don't just "grow up" that way. It takes time, patience, consistency, and a firm commitment to raise any dog properly. Especially a smart, dominant, energetic one with a sense of humor!

A Few Statistics Size normally ranges from 20 to 24 inches, and weight from 35 to more than 60 pounds. Females are normally about 22 inches tall and 45 pounds. Males are somewhat larger at 23 inches and 55 pounds. Color is either black-spotted or liver (brown) spotted. Eyes are black, brown, gold, or blue (one or both eyes may be blue). Black-spotted dogs have black noses and eye trim, and dark (or blue) eyes. Liver-spotted dogs have brown noses and eye trim and brown, gold (or blue) eyes. Patching is quite common, and a large area of color around an eye or over an ear means the dog can't be shown and shouldn't be bred but can still be a handsome pet. Neutered males make especially good companions, so size is often the determining factor when deciding whether to get a male or a female pup. Dals are normally quite healthy and long-lived, males often living to be twelve or more, and females often at least fourteen.