

Your Dalmatian

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



TheHappyPetVet.com
Contact@TheHappyPetVet.com
541-262-4133

Your Dalmatian

Dalmatians: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend, companion, and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Dals and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Energetic and playful
- Intelligent and easy to train
- Gregarious, extroverted personality
- Protective of family, a good watch dog
- People-oriented and eager to please
- Loyal and loving companion

However, no dog is perfect! You may have also noticed these characteristics:

- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Requires vigorous, frequent exercise and space to run
- Exhibits signs of separation anxiety if left alone too much
- Can be aggressive, fearful, or snappy if not socialized properly
- Has a tendency to escape, wander, and roam
- Territorial with larger dogs, especially of the same sex

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! The Dalmatian is an exuberant and fun-loving dog with high exercise needs. She is sensitive to her family and craves human companionship.

The Dalmatian is the only spotted dog breed. Originating in Croatia, in the once-named region of Dalmatia, Dals have a working and sporting heritage. Due to a natural affinity for horses, Dalmatians were often used as carriage dogs and accompanied horse-drawn firefighting wagons in America as well. Dalmatians have great endurance and speed and are quick to protect their families. The Dalmatian is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 12-14 years.



© 2013 VetThink, Inc.





General Health Information for your Dalmatian

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Dalmatian is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Dalmatian's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

Infections

Dalmatians are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as **parvo**, **rabies**, and **distemper**. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity can be a significant health problem in Dalmatians. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your Dal's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas and ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Dalmatian is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior

Your Dalmatian's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Dalmatian. By knowing about health concerns specific to Dalmatians, we can tailor a preventive health plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Dalmatians to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Dalmatians. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the booklet, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Dal looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Dalmatians

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Dalmatians can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- **Glaucoma**, an eye condition that affects Dalmatians and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms, don't wait to call us, go to an emergency clinic!
- **Cataracts** are a common cause of blindness in older Dalmatians. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- **Entropion** is a condition in which the eyelid rolls inward, causing the eyelashes to rub against the cornea (the surface of the eyeball). This is an extremely irritating and painful condition that can ultimately lead to blindness. Entropion can occur in any dog breed, however, your Dalmatian is especially at risk for this heritable disorder. Surgical correction is usually successful if performed early.
- Sometimes normal tissue grows in abnormal places. These growths usually aren't harmful, just unusual. Occasionally a bit of skin may even develop on the surface of the eyeball, a growth called a dermoid. Dermoids are fairly rare, but are more common in Dalmatians than other breeds. If this misplaced tissue isn't hurting your pet, and your dog seems to ignore it, we'll most likely recommend leaving it alone. Dermoids don't typically get worse or spread, but if the growth causes a problem for your friend, surgical removal is generally curative.

Liver Disorder

Some Dalmatians can develop a liver disorder called copper **hepatopathy**. This disease causes toxic levels of copper to build

up in the liver, eventually leading to liver failure if not treated. Affected dogs usually show symptoms of jaundice (yellow eyes, gums, and skin) by about two to four years of age. Your pet should have liver testing early in life to screen for any abnormalities.

Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy "**atopy**", and Dalmatians often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

Bladder Stones

If your Dalmatian has an inherited condition called **hyperuricosuria** (HU), he will produce more uric acid in his urine. Uric acid acts like fertilizer for bladder stone development and sometimes kidney stones as well. A DNA test is available to test for the specific mutation associated with this disease; however, once stones are present, they often must be surgically removed. By testing early, we can identify whether HU is a health risk for your pet, and we can start appropriate dietary therapy to prevent further problems. Without a DNA test, we may recommend frequent urine analysis, x-rays, or ultrasounds to make sure he doesn't have any of these painful stones.

- There are a few different types of stones that can form in the kidney or in the bladder, and Dalmatians are more likely to develop them than other breeds. We'll periodically test his urine for telltale signs indicating the presence of kidney and bladder stones, which are very painful! If your buddy has blood in his urine, can't urinate, or is straining to urinate, it is a medical emergency. Call us immediately!

Heart Disease

Dalmatians are especially prone to a life-threatening heart condition known as **dilated cardiomyopathy**, or DCM, in which the heart becomes so large, thin, and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. As this problem advances, your pet may act weak or tired, faint or collapse, breathe in a labored way, or cough. We'll conduct a yearly electrical heart screening (ECG) and/or an echocardiogram to look for abnormal heart rhythms as early as one year of age. If indicated, treatment includes medication and dietary supplementation.

Joint Disease

When Dalmatian puppies are allowed to grow too quickly, the cartilage in their joints may not attach to the bones properly. This problem is known as **osteochondritis dissecans**, or OCD. If this occurs, surgery may be required to fix the problem. Our recommended growth rate for Dalmatian puppies is no more than four pounds per week. To maintain this rate, don't overfeed him and don't supplement with additional calcium. Feed a large-breed puppy diet rather than an adult or regular

puppy diet. And weigh your puppy every three to four weeks to make sure he's on track.

Laryngeal Paralysis

Older Dalmatians may develop a disease called **laryngeal paralysis** in which the vocal cords become paralyzed and hang down into the airway. The primary symptom is noisy breathing, especially when outside in hot, humid weather or after exercising, but in severe cases, a pet can collapse and have difficulty breathing as well. Treatment may include environment control and medication. Bring your pet in right away if you notice signs of respiratory distress before the problem becomes a surgical emergency!

Epilepsy

There are three types of **seizures** in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Dalmatians are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us or an emergency hospital.

Bone Pain

Growing Dalmatians can suffer from a painful inflammation of the long bones in the legs called **eosinophilic panosteitis**, or pano or eo-pan for short. It usually starts around six to ten months of age and shifts from leg to leg. We'll look for this condition upon examination; if your pal exhibits pain when the area is squeezed or palpated, we'll take X-rays to diagnose the problem. Panosteitis usually causes no permanent damage, but requires pain medication. If your dog has this condition and develops an abnormal gait to compensate for the sore leg(s), rehabilitation exercises may be required.

Mange

Demodex is a microscopic mite that lives in the hair follicles of all dogs. Normally a dog's immune system keeps the mites in check, but some breeds, like your Dalmatian, may develop an overabundance of these mites. In mild cases, pet owners may notice a few dry, irritated, hairless lesions. These often occur on the face or feet and may or may not be itchy. Secondary skin infections may also occur. Prompt veterinary care is important to keep the disease from getting out of hand. Many pets seem to outgrow the problem, while others require lifelong management.

Deafness

Heritable deafness has been noted in some Dal bloodlines, so if his ears are healthy and he's still ignoring you, a more thorough hearing workup may be needed, including brainwave analysis,

if indicated. If you suspect he may not be hearing as well as he should, schedule an appointment with us right away as the problem could also be caused by a severe ear infection.

Dental Abnormalities

Teeth abnormalities are often genetically induced and are relatively common in dogs, especially in purebred dogs like your Dalmatian. An overbite or underbite is called a malocclusion or a bad bite. Oligodontia is a condition where only a few teeth are present. Misaligned teeth can also occur and cause lots of problems, but can usually be corrected with braces or extractions. (Yes, dogs can get braces!) We want to keep your buddy's teeth healthy, so we will be watching his developing teeth closely. The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific oral disorders your pet may encounter.

Skin Conditions

Dalmatians are prone to a variety of skin problems, including **sebaceous adenitis**. You may notice that your dog has dry, scaly skin with patches of hair loss along the top of his head, back of the neck, and along his back. This condition typically develops when your dog is between one and five years of age. Treatment is generally long term, and we'll likely try a combination of approaches to determine which is most effective with your dog. The response to treatment is highly variable, but you'll almost always need to give fatty acid supplements and use special shampoos to remove dead skin and hair. The earlier the skin is checked out, the better the results.

- Dalmatian bronzing syndrome is a skin condition, specific to Dalmatians, that is not yet completely understood. Breeders also call it "Dal Crud", and it typically causes a broad stripe of pink or bronze coloration along the whole topline of the dog's coat, with patchy hair loss and inflammation of the hair follicles as well. Early research looked for a connection with elevated uric acid levels, but further studies show no relation. A skin biopsy is needed to confirm a diagnosis of DBS, and if your pet is affected, he may develop periodic skin infections that can be managed with antibiotics and special shampoo. Dietary modification and other medications can also help reduce severity, but no cure is known. Responsible Dalmatian



breeders recommend that since DBS is clearly inherited, affected dogs should not be used for breeding.

Taking Care of Your Dalmatian at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Dalmatians. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Dal live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn’t put in her mouth.
- ✓ She has low grooming needs. Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly.
- ✓ Dalmatians generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
- ✓ Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don’t worry—we’ll show you how!
- ✓ She’s a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she’ll get bored. That’s when the naughty stuff starts.
- ✓ She is highly intelligent and can be taught to perform a variety of tricks to keep her mentally stimulated.
- ✓ Dalmatians can be sound sensitive, so be prepared for thunderstorms, New Year’s Eve, and The Fourth of July!
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent and don’t give her people food.

- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, but don’t overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Dalmatian needs help.

Office calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Dry, scaly, sometimes itchy hairless patches on face or paws
- ✓ Easily startled, no reaction to unseen sounds

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Depression, poor appetite, yellowing of the eyes
- ✓ Fainting, collapse, breathing issues, cough
- ✓ Louder than normal panting, especially when hot or after exercise



With less than a few drops of blood, we'll have a lifetime of information to assist us in providing the very best care of your friend's unique and individual needs throughout her life!

For more information about genetic testing, visit <http://embarkvet.com>

Your Dalmatian counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to provide the best health care possible: health care that's based on her breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

The Happy Pet Vet
541-262-4133
www.TheHappyPetVet.com
contact@TheHappyPetVet.com

Genetic/DNA Testing

DNA analysis is a rapidly advancing field in healthcare for people and pets. Luckily, technologies exist to screen for hundreds of inherited diseases in pets, just like in people. By screening each pet for as many genetic diseases as possible, we will be better prepared to care for your pet throughout life. This is an important step in caring for your pet because it's always better to know your pal is at risk for a genetic disease before the problem is untreatable.

In an effort to screen for as many genetically linked diseases as possible, we may recommend the **Embark Health Genetic Screen** to screen for more than 150 genetic mutations that cause disease.

Each **Embark Health Genetic Screen** Screens for

- ✓ Over 30 Musculoskeletal Problems
- ✓ Over 30 Metabolic Conditions
- ✓ Over 30 Eye Conditions
- ✓ Over 25 Blood and Clotting Disorders
- ✓ Over 10 Immune System Diseases
- ✓ Over 10 Urinary Tract Problems
- ✓ 10 Skin and Hair Conditions
- ✓ Cancer
- ✓ Dental Disease
- ✓ Drug Metabolism
- ✓ Heart Problems
- ✓ Hormonal Conditions
- ✓ Liver/Gastrointestinal Diseases
- ✓ Midline Defect
- ✓ Neuromuscular Diseases
- ✓ Reproduction Problems
- ✓ Respiratory Conditions

This one-time test is one of the best decisions you can make for your Dalmation's medical care.

References:

Ackerman L. *The Genetic Connection: A Guide to Health Problems in Purebred Dogs*. Second edition. AAHA Press; 2011.
Bell JS, Cavanagh KE, Tilley LP, Smith FW. *Veterinary medical guide to dog and cat breeds*. Jackson, Wyoming. Teton New Media; 2012.
Gough A, Thomas A. *Breed Predispositions to Disease in Dogs and Cats*. 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell; 2010.
Crook A, Dawson S, Cote E, MacDonald S, Berry J. *Canine Inherited Disorders Database* [Internet]. University of Prince Edward Island. 2011. [cited 2013 Apr 11]. Available from: <http://ic.upei.ca/cidd/breed/dalmatian>
Breed Specific Health Concerns [Internet]. American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation, Inc. [cited 2013 Apr 11]. Available from: <http://www.akcchf.org/canine-health/breed-specific-concerns/?breed=dalmatian>

Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Dalmatian Healthy		Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years		
(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Dalmatian-Specific Problems We're Looking For	
○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Internal organ health evaluation Neurological assessment Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Entropion and Dermoid Brachygnathism, Prognathism, and Wry mouth Laryngeal paralysis Deafness	
○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Entropion and Dermoid Brachygnathism, Prognathism, and Wry mouth Demodicosis Laryngeal paralysis Deafness	
○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss obedience and grooming	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Entropion Brachygnathism, Prognathism, and Wry mouth Demodicosis Laryngeal paralysis	
○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation Pre-surgical diagnostics Discuss microchipping	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Entropion Brachygnathism, Prognathism, and Wry mouth Demodicosis Laryngeal paralysis Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) and Panosteitis	
○	6 months to 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Bone and joint exam Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Entropion and Cataracts Brachygnathism, Prognathism, and Wry mouth Demodicosis, Allergies, and Sebaceous adenitis Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) and Panosteitis All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan	

Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Dalmatian Healthy	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Dalmatian-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	○	1 years through 7 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Neurological assessment Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition Schedule spay/neuter after 1 year	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Glaucoma Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) Allergies, Sebaceous adenitis and Dalmatian Bronzing Syndrome Copper hepatopathy, Urolithiasis, and Hyperuricosuria Epilepsy
	○	8 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Neurological assessment Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Glaucoma Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) Allergies, Sebaceous adenitis and Dalmatian Bronzing Syndrome Copper hepatopathy, Urolithiasis, and Hyperuricosuria Epilepsy
	○	10+ years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Neurological assessment Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Glaucoma Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) Allergies, Sebaceous adenitis and Dalmatian Bronzing Syndrome Copper hepatopathy, Urolithiasis, and Hyperuricosuria Epilepsy

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.