



# SELECTING A BREEDER

Once you have decided that you can provide a proper home for a Dalmatian you will need to start contacting reputable breeders. NEVER buy from a pet shop, commercial breeder or backyard breeder. A reputable hobby breeder is your best option for purchasing a healthy, well-adjusted Dalmatian puppy that will be a welcome addition to your family. Never buy on impulse. The puppy will be a part of your family for 12-14 years. This is not a decision to be made in haste.

You can get referrals to reputable breeders from your local all-breed or specialty club. A good way to begin the conversation is to ask if the puppies have been BAER tested and if the parents have been BAER tested and OF A certified. If you get a negative response or the breeder has no idea what you are talking about, say thanks and hang up. Be wary of anyone selling DalmatiOns. A reputable breeder would certainly know the correct spelling is DalmatiAns.

Look for a breeder who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the breed. A reputable breeder is usually highly involved in dog activities like showing, obedience, agility, and rescue. Look for membership in the Dalmatian Club of America, a regional specialty club, and a local all-breed or obedience club. An experienced breeder will act as your mentor and will be there to guide you throughout the life of the dog. A commercial or backyard breeder is through with you as soon as your check clears.

A reputable breeder will interview you at length to be certain you are a good candidate for ownership of a Dalmatian. The breeder will point out the good points as well as the bad points of the breed. In fact, breeders frequently emphasize the bad points so there is no doubt the prospective owner is well versed on the negative aspects of Dalmatian ownership. The breeder will explain why she did this particular breeding, that is, what strengths each parent brought to the breeding. The breeder will want to be certain you are willing to make a lifetime commitment to providing care for this puppy. As you talk to the breeder you should get the feeling that this person is very experienced and very knowledgeable. Check to see that the sire and dam have all applicable health clearances. They should at least have been BAER tested and OFA certified. Other clearances may include CERF and thyroid.

Ask about the parents' show records. If you are considering buying a show puppy it should come from show parents. Beware of breeders who advertise show quality puppies but do not show dogs. Inquire about other dogs in the pedigree. A reputable breeder will be able to give you chapter and verse about the puppies' parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents.

The puppies should have been BAER tested and there would be certification to this effect. A reputable breeder will not sell or giveaway a deaf puppy. The puppies should be at least 7 weeks old and weaned from the mother. Check state laws. Some states require that a puppy be 8 weeks old prior to placement. The puppies should have had preliminary puppy vaccinations as well as regular vet care to include fecal exams and a check-up. The breeder should allow you 2 - 3 business days to have the puppy examined by a veterinarian of your choice. A reputable breeder will require you to buy a crate for the puppy to facilitate housebreaking. A crate is also very useful when you are traveling or to confine a dog that is not mature enough to handle the responsibility of being loose in the house. Young puppies should be crated (but never for more than a couple of hours at a time) when they cannot be supervised.

A reputable breeder will require you to take the puppy to a puppy kindergarten class or basic obedience class or both. The breeder will be able to offer you suggestions about choosing a class or instructor and will give you tips or written instruction about early training.

Be observant when you go to see the puppies. Are the puppies clean and healthy looking? Are they friendly and inquisitive? Is the dam friendly and nice-looking? If the sire is there, is he friendly and nice-looking? Frequently the sire will not be available. A reputable breeder may use a stud dog in another state or even another country if that is the best match. Is there evidence of the breeder's involvement in shows such as pictures of wins, title certificates from AKC, awards, etc? What kind of relationship does the breeder seem to have with the dogs? Are all the dogs kept in clean quarters? How many litters does the breeder have per year? It is unusual for a truly responsible breeder to have more than one or two litters per year.

A reputable breeder will have a written sales contract that outlines the rights and responsibilities of both parties and that lists any guarantees. The breeder will require that pet quality puppies be spayed or neutered by a specified date and will not give registration paper until this has been done. A breeder will require that puppies purchased as show quality be shown to their championship (or to some level of success) and have applicable health clearances before breeding. Remember, if a dispute should arise, only those items that are actually in writing will have any effect on AKC or a court. Be wary of contracts that require you to breed the dog even if you do not want to do so.

A reputable breeder will give you a supply of the puppy's food, a four or five generation pedigree, health records, a list of necessary supplies, and written instructions on caring for the puppy. Some breeders include pictures of the litter and pictures of both parents. You will probably get a call every few days for the first couple of weeks to be sure everything is going well. Reputable breeders will encourage you to contact them if you have problems or questions.

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