

Defending an Ancient Breed

By Ed Petit
Hansom Dalmatians

Many DCA members today were not around when this issue failed the last time and the negativism that has dominated the discussion since then has done permanent damage to the breed. Debates, surveys, petitions, research and statistics, all negatively charged must reflect a breed on the brink to young people who rely on the parent club as the ultimate source of information. Luckily my experience started about ten years earlier when apparently the people I relied on had a healthier respect for Dalmatians. It is high time that we step back, take a look at what we have and appreciate the good fortune that is ours. Each time there is a debate, one side loses and one side wins. Some of the losers give up and go to another breed; some of the winners get tired of fighting. **WHERE ARE THE DEFENDERS OF THE BREED?** Have all the brilliant breeders passed away? Is all the remaining positive knowledge locked away in people driven away by the negative? In the end the Dalmatian loses every time.

What I see when I look at the Dalmatian is a canine unique in many ways, an ancient breed, so old that any ancestral breeds are mere conjecture. The presence of uric acid confirms a lineage untouched by at least any modern breed. In the history of the world there has never been another Dalmatian-like canine and as "The Coach Dog" is the only true trotting breed. Every other breed has been bred for some other purpose. This multi-purpose, family, guard and horse companion requires a totally different genetic package than a breed whose task is to hunt and point. Any attempt to modify an ancient breed should be considered extreme. If there is a low uric acid, purebred Dalmatian on Planet Earth, we should find it and use that dog to accomplish any improvements should we determine that improvement is necessary. This should have been a natural first step and not a process that begins after the breed has suffered so much humiliation and is apparently doomed to suffer it again. What we really need is an understanding of the mechanism that causes some dogs to form stones while others live a perfectly

healthy and long life. Not only free from stones but free from any other ailments as well.

In the current debate that question seems to perplex the proponents of change. I recently heard a PhD on the radio ask that very question about humans and why some suffer from gastrointestinal problems while so many others do not. I wanted to reach into the radio and shake him by the collar. "It's stress you idiot." But if the answer is too simple he can't sell his drug and we don't need our Pointer. It is our responsibility to recognize stress and protect our Dalmatians. Stress takes many forms and some dogs are just stress cases unable to cope with so much negative going on around them. These dogs should not be bred.

Stress is why the results of the urinalysis survey conducted by Dr. Hughes were so predictably poor. The national specialty is a good place for such a survey for only one reason. It is the largest number of Dalmatians gathered at one place in this country. It is perhaps the worst place because every dog used in that survey was under some form of travel stress. Very possibly none or at least few will become stone formers. Thanks to Dr. Hughes we now know that show and travel conditions can seriously impact the health of our dogs. It is up to us to minimize the stress and increase hydration during these difficult times. **I BELIEVE THIS IS NOT ONLY TRUE FOR DALMATIANS BUT FOR ALL BREEDS.**

Let me finish here by stating the obvious, I am opposed to the adulteration of the Dalmatian by the introduction of any breed even if in the final analysis you claim it is only 2 or 3%. At the end of the day we will never be able to say that the Dalmatian is unique in any way.



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