

YOU BE THE JUDGE

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THE DALMATIAN

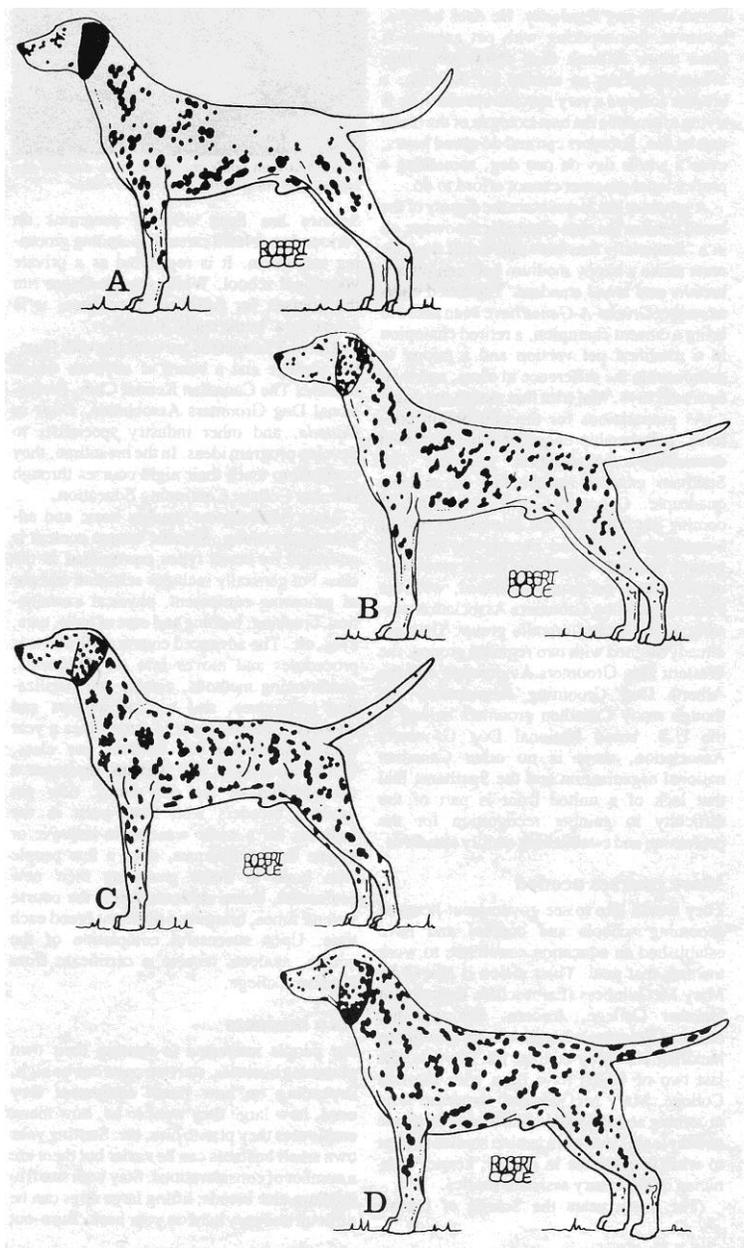
Three of these four Open Class males are real-life Dalmatians; the fourth doesn't exist in reality. Decide on three placements – first, second and third. The fourth dog isn't competitive; I have loaded him down with too many informative faults. Can you identify these faults?

The three real life examples have each placed at least fourth at the group level, and one has competed at Best in Show level. All three examples are balanced but each in a different way. This real life selection poses the question of functional Dalmatian type as well as the influence of soundness.

One of these examples is 24 ½ inch, one is 24 inch, one is 23 inch and one is 22 inch - all with the same length of body but not the same leg length, or the same leg length but not the same structure. Overall balance being of prime importance, which one of these examples is the better balanced as a Dalmatian?

DOG A

The markings on this real life dog's ear could be more broken up – preferably spotted – but white hairs are present in the ear colour so we know it is not a patch. It would have been preferred that he not have any white 'windows' (a factor that cannot be precisely influenced by breeding to the same degree that spot size can), and that a few small spots be present in the tail.



Be that as it may, in my opinion this well balanced, symmetrical in outline, Best in Show Level Dalmatian, free from coarseness and lumber, should receive the first place award. His colour could be either

pure white and black or pure white with liver spots. If liver, the liver should be chocolate rather than tan or yellow.

The head is evenly balanced between muzzle and skull. The nose colour and eye rims are complete. There is a moderate amount of stop, the skull is free from wrinkle. The eyes are medium size, round, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression (dark in black spotted, and liver brown in liver spotted).

The neck is fairly long, nicely arched, light and tapering, entirely free from throatiness. Forequarter and hindquarter angulation is moderate. In the front the straight forelegs are as long as the body is deep and there is a slight bend to pastern. In the rear there is angulation at stifle and hock. The withers are well defined, ribs well sprung, back level with a strong but not pronounced arch over loin. Feet are round, compact with arched toes.

DOG B

In the United States this oversize Dalmatian would have to be disqualified, being half an inch over the allowed 24 inch maximum. In Canada this ½ inch over the CKC 24 inch maximum is treated as a fault. I selected this particular example not because he is oversize but because of the reason for his extra height and the effect of this height on balance. His balance departs but I have weighed virtues against departure and have given him second place.

At first glance his body appears anatomically shorter than the other males but in fact all four have the same body length. He appears shorter in body because his foreleg is about an inch longer than the male I selected for first place. This extra length of leg produces an impressive balance but not necessarily the balance associated with an endurance trotting Dalmatian possessing only moderate leg length.

In the rear the second thigh is overly long. This extra length between stifle and hock offsets this dog's overly long forearm. This departure exists in part because from the litter we tend to select the sound puppy which is balanced front with rear. This particular example by comparison exemplifies that selection while at the same time strengthens an appreciation for Dog A's balance and potential for endurance at the trot.

Comparison also takes appreciation for soundness into account. Although this dog departs a degree from Dalmatian balance, given a choice for stud and knowing how difficult it is to produce good shoulder, I would opt for using Dog B over Dog C.

DOG C

Having discussed in some detail the virtues and faults possessed by the first and second place dogs, it can readily be seen that this dog also has merit which is, in my opinion, only sufficient to award him third place in this line up. This is partly because this real life dog has two structural faults not possessed by either the first or second place dog.

This third place dog is balanced because his less than ideal steep upper arm and shoulder blade (which combined to cause the front pastern to steepen) is complimented in the rear by a flat pelvis. Neither the front nor rear structural faults are extreme, however both take away from appearance stacked and affect movement at the trot.

DOG D

This dog, as I have drawn him, doesn't exist. I have given him so many informative faults that he could not be considered for a ribbon. The most obvious fault being too much depth of body and lumber for a Dalmatian. To add insult to injury I have shortened his legs almost an inch. As for structure, he is sound.

There are three faults in the area of the head: the skull is domed; the ears are large and low set; and the skin is loose at the throat. On the other end, his tail spots could be smaller than his body spots. Not visible, his coat is ticked, his eyes are blue (interestingly, blue eyes are not penalized in the U.S.), some of his spots have bronzed, some are lemon coloured and the rims around his eyes are not complete.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

In Canada there are five Dalmatian disqualifications. In Canada a patch is a disqualification as is an undershot bite or a bite more than 1/8 inch overshot. A tri-colour disqualifies as do spots of any other colour other than black on pure white or liver brown on pure white. In Canada over 24 inches at the withers is a fault; in the U.S. over 24 inch disqualifies.

THE PATCH

Probably the primary marking concern is determining if a large area of colour is or is not a disqualifying patch. I say this because soon after the Canadian Kennel Club Dalmatian Standard declared patches a disqualification (1 July, 1975) reports of judges disqualifying dogs with heavy ear spotting (like Dog A) began to arrive. This is not so today but the concern is still present and breeders have written requesting that I elaborate.

The Standard in part advises: “The spots should not intermingle, but be as round and as well defined as possible, the more distinct the better, in size they should be from that of a dime to a half dollar.” And ... “Several spots that are so adjacent that they actually touch one another at the edges do not constitute a patch.”

Real patches are most commonly found on the ears and around the eyes. Dalmatian puppies should be born white. When patches do occur they can be seen on the new born puppy. I should add that often at birth the top of the ear may show a dark area of skin, which is not a patch as the hair covering the area is white. With this ear in mind, you should examine a heavily marked ear to see if there are any fine white hairs amongst the dark hairs. The presence of such hair is the most reliable indication that the ear is spotted, not patched. A further way of checking is to look for white hairs on the inner side of the ear, another indication that a heavily pigmented ear is spotted.