

# The Dalmatian



Breed standard with comments for the  
European Cooperation of Dalmatian Clubs  
December 2000





The bright,  
sparkling,  
intelligent  
and alert  
expression!

FROM YOUNG TO OLD, 11 MONTHS AND 11 YEARS



## Introduction

This compendium gives commentaries to and explains the Dalmatian breed standard (FCI No. 153, 1999-04-14). The aim of the compendium is that it should be of use in the education of judges so as to achieve a more homogeneous understanding of the breed among European and Scandinavian judges. The compendium can further be of value in the education of Dalmatian breeders so as to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the breed standard.

It would be a great advantage if the same compendium can be used in the future in all membership countries of the European Co-operation of Dalmatian Clubs (ECDC). The compendium shall be available in translation in several languages: the language of each membership country in addition to English, German and in due time, French.

The commentaries to the breed standard focuses on the various details of conformation and appearance included in the standard. The compendium offers explications on particular points that, in order to reach a fuller understanding and avoid misinterpretations, need to be further explained and clarified. In some instances no commentaries are offered, the reason being that the standard clearly states what is desired, comments being superfluous.

Exactly what illustrations should go with the compendium we see as a matter for each membership club to decide. We have therefore decided to place the majority of the photos in a special Appendix, making it easier for each club to make its own choice of illustrating material.

In case one country might want to make any changes of the text commentaries this must however be clearly stated in that country's version of the compendium. An area where there might be a need for such changes can be dentition, since the views on this matter varies considerably among countries.

On behalf of the ECDC Judging Committee

December 2000

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Svenska Dalmatiner-Sällskapet

**FRONT AND EXPRESSION**



## Standard: Dalmatian

FCI nr 153, original 1999-04-14

Origin: Dalmatia, Croatian Republic/FCI

Utilization: Companion dog, family dog, suitable to be trained for various purposes

FCI-Classifikation: Group 6,

Scent hounds and related breeds

Section 3

Related breeds without working trial.

### Brief historical summary:

The origin of the Dalmatian dog is still obscure and rests solely on suppositions. From illustrations, discovered in the tombs of ancient Pharaohs and similar to paintings dating back to the period from the 16th to the 18th century, one can suppose that the Dalmatian has been in existence for some thousand of years. Church chronicles from the 14th century and from the year 1719 definitely suggest that the breed originated in the Mediterranean region and especially in the neighbourhood of the Dalmatian coast.

The earlier illustrations of the breed can be found in pictures by Italian painters of the 16th century and in a fresco in Zaostrog (Dalmatia) that can be dated back to the year 1710 approximately. A work by Thomas Bewick published in 1792, contains a description and the drawing of a Dalmatian, which Bewick refers to as 'the Dalmatian or coach Dog'.

The first standard for the Dalmatian was written by an Englishman named Vero Shaw in the year 1882; in 1890 this standard was transferred to the official breed standard.

#### COMMENTARY:

*There are many more or less historically well-founded speculations about the origin of the Dalmatian. Exactly from where the breed comes and how it was first used by humans are therefore matters that give rise to many unanswered questions. That the Dalmatian is a very old (even ancient) breed, dating several hundred, perhaps thousand years back in time, is however generally agreed. One theory is that the breed came from India to Europe in the Middle Ages with the gypsies. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the breed became popular in England and in other European countries as a coach dog in distinguished stables. The Dalmatian, however, not merely served as a decorous object of status for the aristocracy. Its role was to stay in the stables with the horses as a guard and watch dog. When on travel the Dalmatian ran close to the coach and during breaks stayed with the carriage watching it as well as the travellers' belongings.*

## **General appearance:**

The Dalmatian is a well-balanced, distinctively spotted, strong, muscular and active dog. Symmetrical in outline, free from coarseness and lumber, and as a former 'coach dog' capable of great endurance at a fair turn of speed.

### COMMENTARY:

*The Dalmatian is a well-proportioned dog. This means that it should be slightly rectangular. It should neither be quadratic nor give a long and short-legged impression.*

*The expression 'distinctively spotted' means that it should look spotted. A heavy spotting with very many spots that overlap to a great extent or a light spotting with rather few spots should however not be regarded as a major fault. The spotting of a Dalmatian should never be allowed to be rated above the dog's type, conformation and movements.*

*The expression 'strong' refers to a dog with good substance and a well-developed body. It further implies that the dog should be in good condition with well developed (although not exaggerated) muscles and a firm and hard body. A Dalmatian must not be too thin and lean looking. It is important to consider that a Dalmatian often matures late and that it will not be fully grown and developed until it has reached three to four years of age. Not seldom will the dog look its best around eight years. A young dog with correct proportions and conformation can look a little 'leggy' without this being a major fault.*

## **Important proportions:**

Length of the body: height at the withers = approximately 10:9.

Length of skull: length of muzzle = 1:1.

### COMMENTARY:

*These measures have been included in the new standard from 1999. This addition to the standard is to be welcomed since there no longer will be room for free interpretations.*

## **Behaviour/Temperament:**

Outgoing and friendly, not shy or hesitant, free from nervousness and aggression.

### COMMENTARY:

*One should not forget that the breed originally served as a watchdog and that the Dalmatian therefore has a fair amount of guarding instinct. In modern society there is however necessary that dogs are more open minded and friendly towards strangers. Very shy or nervous behaviour should not be accepted and such faults of temperament, including aggressive behaviour, are consequently disqualifying.*

## Head

Of fair length

### Cranial region:

**Skull:** Flat, fairly broad between the ears, with well-defined temples. Slight frontal furrow. Entirely free from wrinkle.

COMMENTARY:

*That the skull is fairly broad between the ears with well-defined temples makes the proportions of the skull fairly even. The form of the skull should be such that its length, breadth, and depth measures fairly the same.*

*The standard further states under the heading 'Important Proportions' that the length of the skull in relation to the muzzle should be 1:1. This means that a too short as well as a too long muzzle is incorrect.*

**Stop:** Moderately well defined.

COMMENTARY:

*A stop that is too pronounced gives an incorrect profile (more like a Pointer).*

### Facial region:

**Nose:** Nose leather in the black spotted variety always black, in the liver spotted variety always brown

**Muzzle:** Long powerful, never snipy. Nasal bridge straight and parallel to the upper outline of the skull.

**Lips:** Clean fitting the jaw rather closely, not pendulous. A complete pigmentation is desired.

COMMENTARY:

*Few Dalmatians have complete lip pigmentation. Those that have are often very heavily spotted. Lack of pigmentation of the lips is common and should not be considered a major fault.*

**Jaws/teeth:** Jaws strong with a perfect and regular scissors bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws. Desirable is a complete set of 42 teeth (in accordance with the teeth formula). The teeth are evenly proportioned and white.

COMMENTARY:

*Strong white teeth with a perfect scissors bite and complete dentition is clearly what to prefer. It does occur however that teeth are missing. Any deviations from what the standard decrees in this respect should be noted and the seriousness of the fault weighed into the overall judgement of the dog's merits and faults.*

**Eyes:** Set moderately well apart, medium size, round bright and sparkling with an intelligent and alert expression. Colour dark brown in black spotted, light brown to amber in liver spotted dogs. Eye rims completely black in the black spotted, and completely liver brown in the liver spotted dogs. Eyelid close to the eyeball.

COMMENTARY:

*Entropion occurs occasionally in the breed and this is a thing to be observed. Almond shaped eyes is not typical for the breed. It is desirable that the eyes are dark. Light eyes give a sharp, untypical expression. Considering liver spotted Dalmatians the standard states that the eye colour should be 'light brown to amber'. The reference to amber is however not particularly clear since amber can vary in colour from light yellow to dark orange-hazel. Yellow eyes are not desired on a liver. Light eyes have become quite common today both on liver and on black spotted Dalmatians.*

**Ears:** Set on rather high, moderate size, rather wide at base. Carried close to the head, gradually tapering to the rounded point. Fine in texture, marking well broken up, preferably spotted.

COMMENTARY:

*Too large or too small (the latter do not occur very frequently) ears are not correct. The ear should not reach beyond the corner of the mouth. Solid colour on the ears is not desired but can be accepted under the condition that the colour is not on both sides of the ear. See further down under 'Eliminating faults' – 'patch'.*

**Neck:**

Fairly long, nicely arched, tapering to the head, free from throatiness.

COMMENTARY:

*Too long narrow and hyper elegant necks do occasionally occur. This gives the dog incorrect proportions.*

## **Body:**

### **Withers:**

Well defined.

COMMENTARY:

*A well-defined withers is equal to a sufficiently long and laid back shoulder.*

### **Back:**

Powerful, level.

COMMENTARY:

*That the standard asks for a 'level' back does not mean that the topline should be totally level and flat. It is important to recognise the difference between the back and the loin. The loin should be slightly arched (see below).*

### **Chest:**

Not too broad, but deep and capacious. Brisket should reach to the elbows. Forechest well visible in profile. Ribs well proportioned, long, nicely sprung, never flat, barrel-shaped or malformed.

COMMENTARY:

*The chest should constitute the larger part of the dog's length. The forechest is often not sufficiently developed, constituting a common fault today which should be noted.*

### **Loin:**

Clean, muscular and slightly arched.

COMMENTARY:

*The loin must not be excessively long, roached or unsteady in movement.*

### **Croup:**

Very slightly sloping.

COMMENTARY:

*The croup must not slope so much that it affects movements negatively.*

**Flanks:**

Narrow.

**COMMENTARY:**

*Loose skin at the flanks occurs and is not desired.*

**Lower line:**

Bell distinctly tucked up towards the loin.

**COMMENTARY:**

*With correct proportions (long chest) there will be a natural tuck up at the loins. A great fault is a short rib cage with a greyhound like profile.*

**Tail:**

Reaching approximately to the hock. Strong at the base, evenly tapering towards the tip; free from coarseness. Inserted neither too low nor too high. At rest carried pendent with a slight upward curve in the lowest third of the tail. When moving carried higher slightly above the topline, but never upright (gay) or curled. Preferably spotted.

**COMMENTARY:**

*Note coarse and clumsy tails. A too thin and narrow tail is undesirable as well. The tail should not be carried too high or curled over the back.*

**Limbs:****Forequarters:**

Forelegs perfectly straight, with strong round bone down to feet.

**- shoulders:**

Moderately oblique, clean and muscular.

**COMMENTARY:**

*The shoulder should be sufficiently long and be normally angulated for a trotting breed.*

**- elbows:**

Close to the body, neither turned in nor out.

COMMENTARY:

*A common fault is too straight upper arms, which results in an elbow placed too much forward and in poor contact with the rib cage.*

**- pastern joint:**

Strong, with slight spring.

COMMENTARY:

*Should be slightly angulated and not too short.*

**Hindquarters:** Rounded, muscular, and clean. Viewed from the rear hind legs vertical and parallel.

COMMENTARY:

*The angulation of the croup must not be too strong since this will affect movements negatively.*

**- stifle:** Well bent.

COMMENTARY:

*The stifle must be in line under the hip joint for best balance.*

**- lower thigh:** Strong.

COMMENTARY:

*The lower thigh must be of good length and be of fairly the same length as the thighbone.*

**- hock joint:** Strong, well bent.

COMMENTARY:

*Poorly angulated hock joints are a common fault and this affects movements negatively.*

## Feet:

Round, compact with well arched toes (cat feet). Pads round, tough and elastic. Nails black or white in black spotted variety; in liver spotted brown or white.

COMMENTARY:

*Loose and a slightly too big feet do occur. This should be noted and weighed into the overall picture.*

## Gait/Movement

Great freedom of movement. Smooth, powerful, rhythmic action with long stride and good drive from hindquarters; viewed from the rear legs moving parallel, hindlegs tracking the fore. A short stride and paddling action are incorrect.

COMMENTARY:

*'Smooth, powerful, rhythmic action with long stride and good drive' says the most. To achieve this ideal scheme of movement it is necessary that the angulation of the front is sufficient too provide good length of stride. The movement from the rear must not merely consist of legs being thrown out behind the dog but derive from a fundamental co-ordination of the works of hips, knee and stifle. Lacks of co-ordination between movement from back and rear do occur and originates from insufficient harmonisation between angulation in shoulder and hindquarters respectively. The typical elasticity of the movement of a Dalmatian can easily be lost if the dog is shown trotting at a too high speed. Typical movements should give the impression that the dog can move long distances with great ease and without too much effort.*

## Coat:

- **hair:** Short, hard, dense, sleek and glossy.

### Colour:

Ground colour pure white. Black spotted variety with black spots, liver spotted variety with brown spots; not intermingling but round, well defined and as well distributed as possible. Size 2-3 cm in diameter. Spots on the head, tail and extremities smaller than those on the body.

COMMENTARY:

*Colour and spotting must never be given such weight that a dog being excellent in these respects is preferred to a dog of better type, conformation and temperament. The colour should not vary on one and the same dog.*

*Occasionally the colour of liver spotted dog varies somewhat.*

*Spotting can vary from very richly spotted dogs to sparsely spotted ones. As long as the overall impression is that of a spotted dog such variation is acceptable.*

*The ideal, so highly desired but so difficult to achieve, is that the spots being even in size and quality are evenly distributed over the entire body. Very small, spots which do not have the desired rounded form (s.c. 'ticks') can make the spotting look muddled and untidy.*

*A dog that has either rather too many or too few spots of good size and quality (form and density of colour) is to be preferred to a dog with a more suitable amount of spots but of more varying size and inferior quality. However, too much attention must not be paid to trifles as long as the overall impression of the spotting is pleasing.*

*The standard requires the markings on the ears to be well broken up. Ears that are not sufficiently broken up or even of solid colour are acceptable as long as it is not a question of a 'patch' (a congenial, big marking, see below under 'Eliminating faults'). Lack of spots on the tail is a minor fault and the presence of a few is not very significant.*

## Size and weight:

Overall balance of prime importance.

### Height at withers:

For dogs 56 - 61 cm

For bitches 54 - 59 cm

COMMENTARY:

*These limits are not absolute and could be exceeded by one or two centimetres either way. Overall balance and proportions are more important than any few centimetres. Today the breed does not have any problems of size.*

### Weight:

For dogs approximately ca 27 - 32 kg

For bitches approximately ca 24 - 29 kg

COMMENTARY:

*Male dogs of correct size and substance do often weigh one or a few kilos more than what is stated in the standard.*

## Faults:

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportions to its degree.

- Bronzing (temporary bronze-like discolouring of the black spots).

COMMENTARY:

*In connection with shedding of the coat or a weakened condition due to other circumstances the colour of the spotting may temporarily fade, both in the black and liver spotted Dalmatian. Bronzing means that the spots lose their depth of colour, which makes the black spots fade into dark rusty brown or hazel, the liver spots fade into rusty brown, tan or orange/lemon. Bronzing can occur on the entire body or only on affected parts, e.g. on the throat and sides of the neck or on the inside of the legs. Bronzing can be very difficult to distinguish from a permanent and eliminating fault of colour ('tri colour', see below).*

## Eliminating faults:

- Definitely over or undershot mouth.
- Ectropion, entropion, wall eyes, eyes of different colour (heterochromia).
- Blue eyes.
- Deafness
- Limited patching around eyes (monocle) or elsewhere, yet acceptable for breeding.

### COMMENTARY:

*Dalmatian puppies are born white and the spots begin to emerge first around 10 days of age. A 'patch' is a congenital spot and it is clearly visible on the new-born puppy. Many breeders put down a patched puppy already at birth but occasionally they are raised and taken to a show by the owner.*

*In principle a patch can be located anywhere on the body but it is usually found on the head, around an eye ('monocle') or on an ear. Sometimes one dog can have several patches on different places on the body. The patch has a strong colour and will be free from any occasional white hairs. On ears the colour of the patch goes straight through which means that if one turns the flap of the ear, the corresponding part on the other side will also be coloured. A patch distinguishes itself from a cluster of spots by having a sharply demarcated and even border. If it is located to the head it looks a bit as if the dog carries a Basque beret.*

*Sometimes it can be very difficult even for a breed specialist to decide whether a dog really has a patch or not. Judges are therefore recommended not to give a '0' to a Dalmatian unless he or she is not absolutely sure that it is a question of a 'patch' and not an assembly of spots floating into each other.*

- Tricolour (black and brown spots on the same dog).

### COMMENTARY:

*Tri colour is a permanent state of spots of more than one colour on a single individual. On a black spotted dog the following colours can occur: yellow, liver, tan or brindle. On a liver spotted dog the following colours can occur: orange or tan. It is to be noted that a liver dog can never have black pigment. Tan coloured spots may occur on the body on the usual places for such markings on dogs, namely on the lower part of the legs, the forechest, the chin, on the head around the muzzle and eyes and in the anal region. Tan markings on young Dalmatians is very difficult to detect due to the faded shade of the tan markings. Tri colour can be very hard to differentiate from 'bronzing' which is a temporary condition and not an eliminating fault. Judges are therefore recommended to be extremely careful in any eventual decisions to give prize '0' due to tri colouring.*

- Lemon (lemon or orange spots).

COMMENTARY:

*On a lemon spotted Dalmatian the spots have about the same colour as a golden retriever. The colour can vary from light yellow to a darker yellow shade. A lemon spotted Dalmatian always has black nose pigment.*

*An orange coloured Dalmatian has the colour similar to an orange-belton cocker spaniel (light reddish brown). An orange spotted Dalmatian always has brown nose pigment.*

*An adult orange spotted Dalmatian might be mistaken for a sun tanned poorly coloured liver.*

*Lemon and orange spotting are clearly visible on the young puppy. These types of colour faults are not very common but do occur from time to time.*

- Very timid or aggressive behaviour.

**Nota bene:**

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

**Recommendation:**

(This part of the text has been excluded by the national kennel clubs from the breed standard)

In order to reduce the incident of deafness in Dalmatians (20-30%)

- Bilaterally deaf Dalmatians and blue-eyed Dalmatian should be discarded from breeding, ideally unilaterally deaf dogs likewise.
- Dogs with limited patching around eyes (monocle) or elsewhere should be accepted for breeding.
- Dogs with pigmented scrotum should be preferred.



**Lemon spotted puppy**



**Orange spotted puppy**

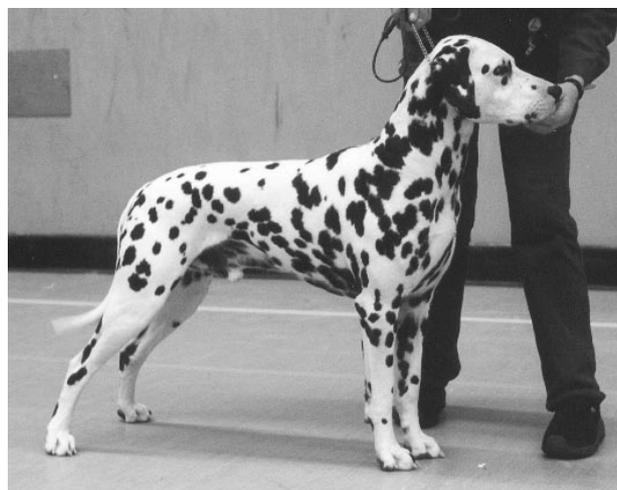


**Lever spotted puppy with patch**

## Appendix 1

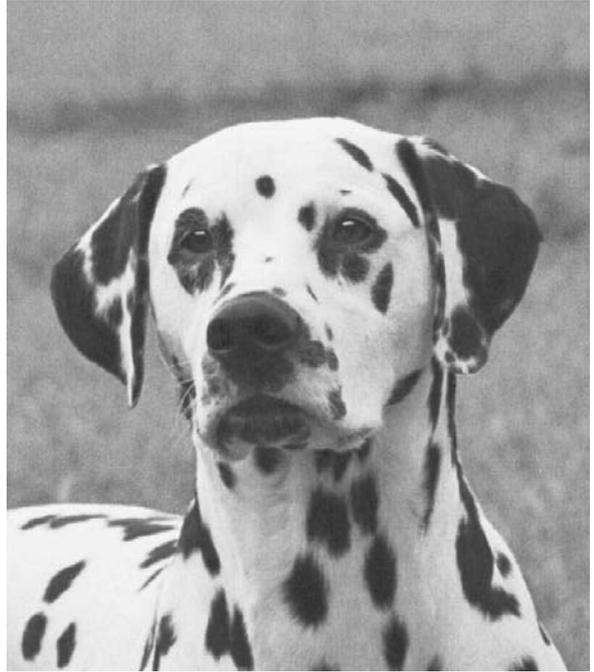
The photos below illustrate dogs and bitches which all are of excellent type.

### Dogs



**Bitches**



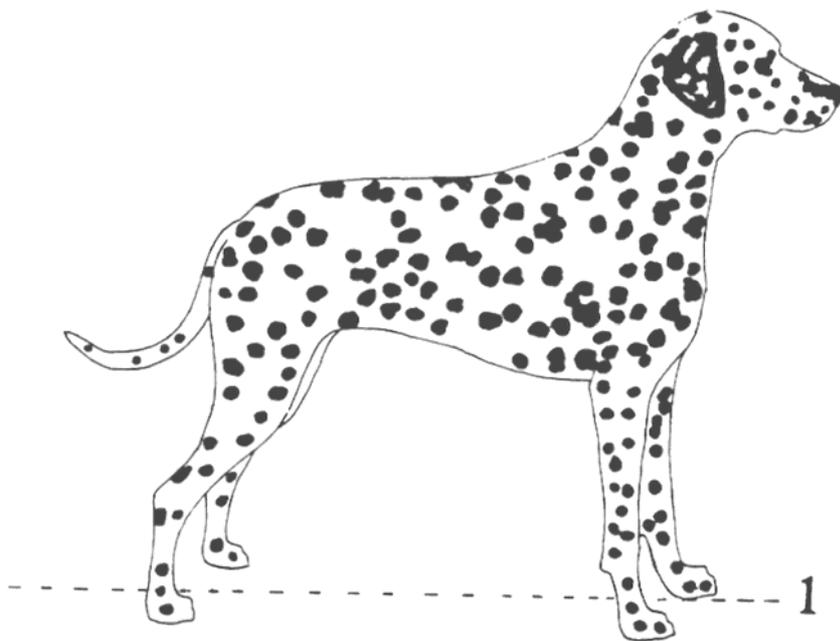


## THE SPOTTING OF THE DALMATIAN CAN BE MISLEADING

When it comes to judging the exterior of a dog it is not unusual that even people who are very knowledgeable of the breed are misled by the spotting of the Dalmatian.

To prove how important the spotting as a whole and the location of the spots in relation to each other is to our breed, we will now present five drawings with exactly identical outline but with quite different spotting, numbered from 1 to 5.

**From an exterior point of view this outline is not quite correct. It does not have the desired proportions. The dog is a little too high on his legs (see line of short dashes) and is too short in neck.**



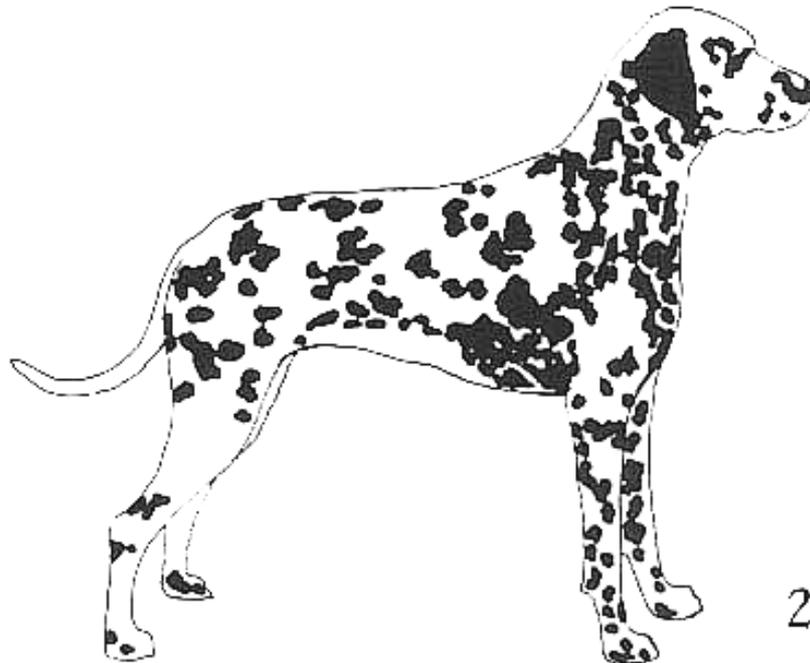
The above picture shows an almost ideal spotting. When the spots are as evenly spread as this, there can be less of them but hardly more and still be close to the ideal. The real advantage with this spotting is the even size of the rather big spots.

It is interesting to note how the feminine stamp is emphasised by the beautiful spotting, which also gives the dog a keen and intelligent expression. The unfortunate row of spots on the nose makes it seem to be pointing upwards, which it is not.

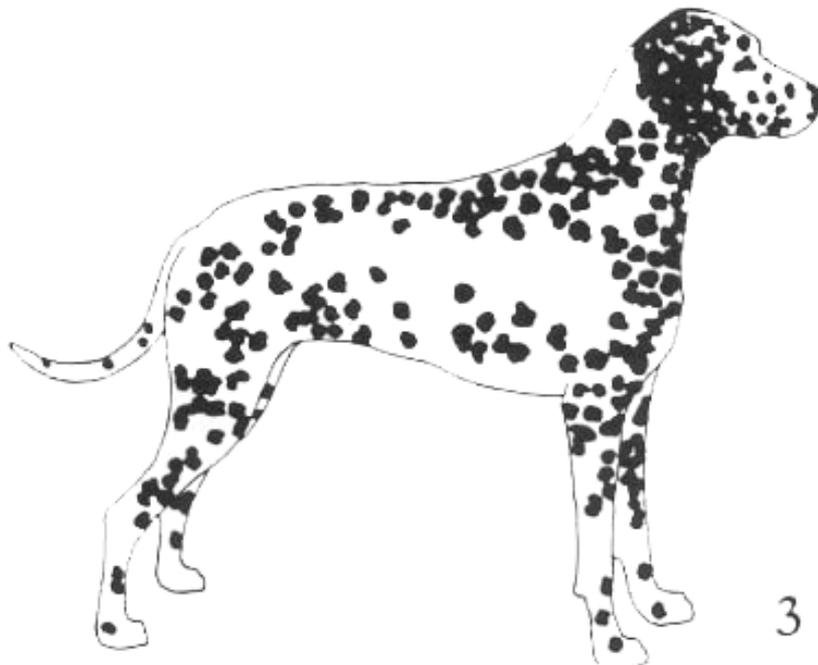
When judging Dalmatians you must be able to focus on spotting versus outline, not to be misled by an optical illusion.

You will soon notice that if you focus on the outline, which thus gets closer, the spotting of the dog becomes less important. But if you, on the other hand, focus on the spots, which is necessary when assessing their quality and location as a whole, the outline will give way.

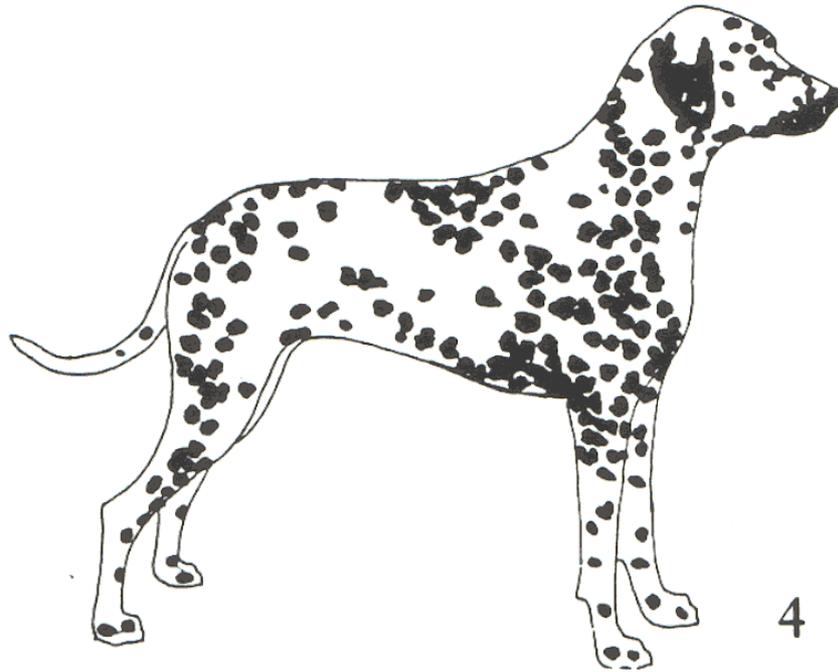
**As for the following drawings, 2 - 5, a quick and rather precipitate judgement might be as follows:**



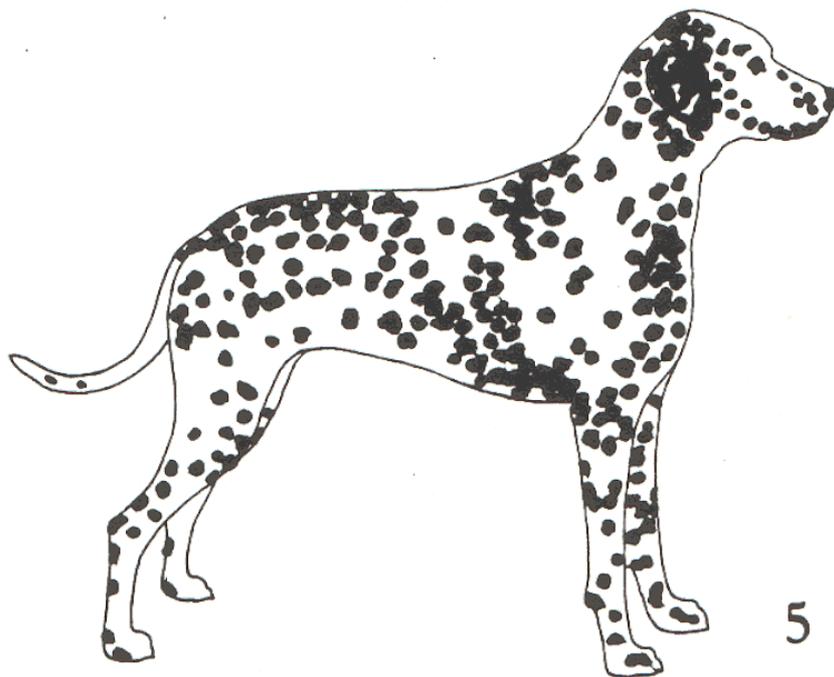
Head looks rather heavy and sloppy. Neck seems coarse. Shoulder is straight and elbow turns outwards. Short and flat ribcage. Hindquarters quite good but too light compared to the heavy front.



Head seems a bit short. Skull seems overdone from occiput and down. Where the withers are is difficult to see. Shoulder is sloping too much. The dog seems somewhat tied in at the elbow, which gives an impression of a French front. Shallow and wide ribcage. Too paunchy in abdomen. Falling away croup with low set tail.

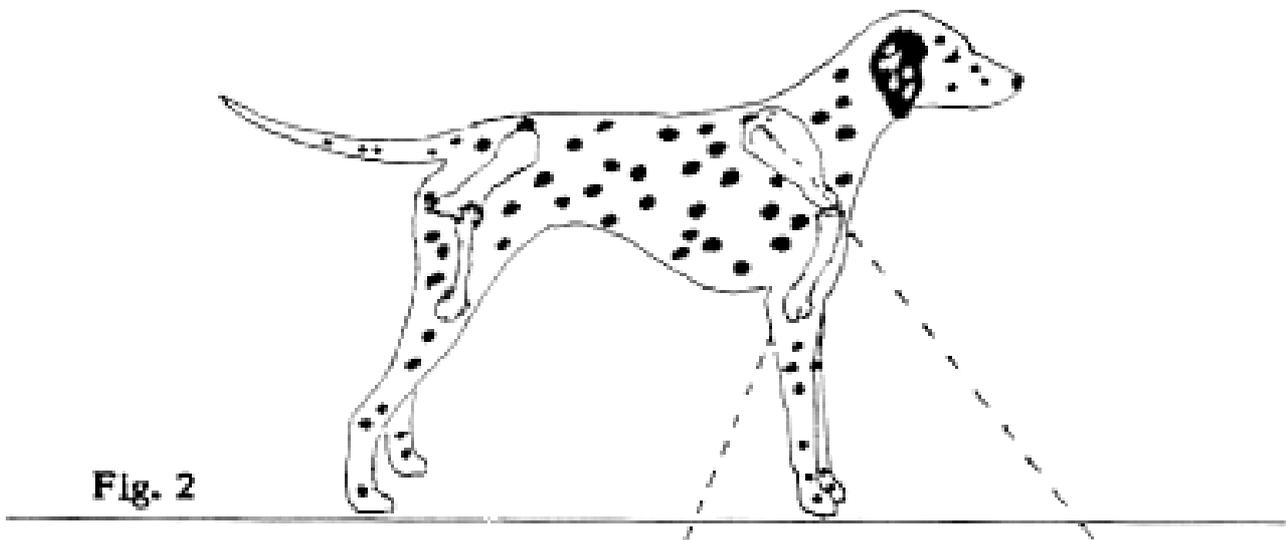
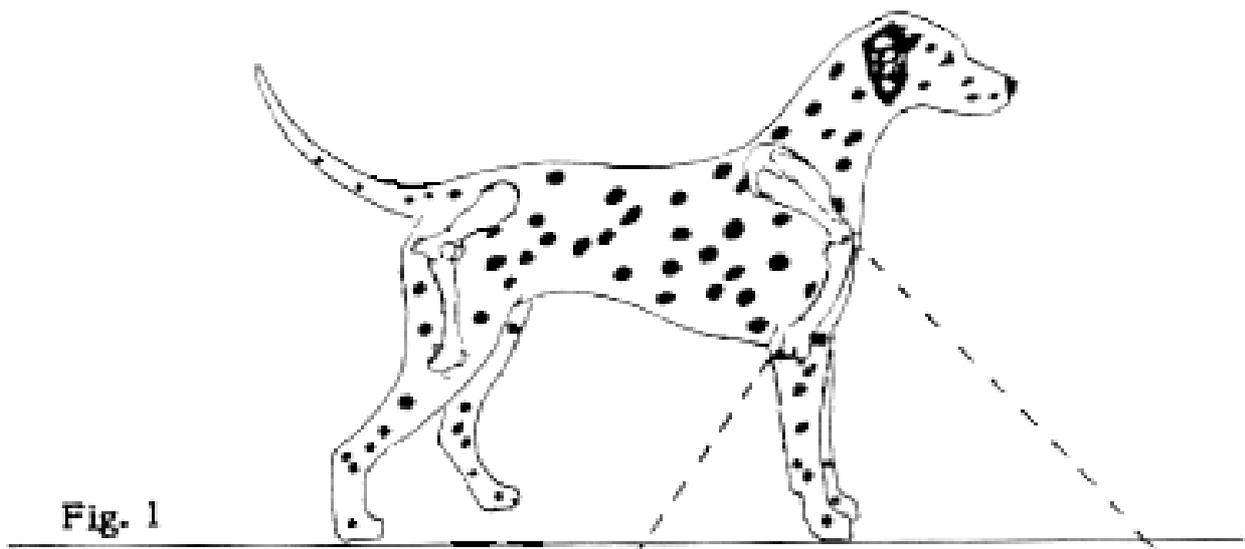


Arched skull. Unpleasant expression. Weak in muzzle. Ear seems to be low set. Short and coarse neck. Too massive and heavy in front. Straight hindquarters. Unrefined and "common" for type.



Long head. Low skull with no stop. Too much lip. Ribcage too heavy, and too much arch over loin. The dog looks unbalanced and leggy. Hindquarters overangulated. Not enough bone.

Text and illustrations: Copyright Ann-Marie Hammarlund



**Fig. 1** shows a Dalmatian, which is well angulated both in front and behind giving a longer neck, more depth of brisket, a stronger loin and, above all, more correct movement.

**Fig. 2** shows a Dalmatian which is straight in shoulder and upper arm and has inadequate angulation behind, especially in stifle. This adds quite a bit to the height at withers (3-5 cm). This Dalmatian is too high on his legs and has a short and shallow ribcage, short neck and not enough bone.

The lines of short dashes show how the angulation affects the dog's maximum stride. The dog in Fig. 1 has no doubt the most far-reaching stride with good elasticity. The dog in Fig. 2 moves with a shorter stride without elasticity. This stride is also less effortless, but can wrongly be interpreted as reachy as the shorter stride makes the gait look very much faster.

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