

Dalmatians

The Dalmatian is a breed of dog whose roots are often said to trace back to Dalmatia, where the first illustrations of the dog have been found. The Dalmatian is noted for its unique black- or brown-spotted coat and was mainly used as a carriage dog in its early days. Today, this dog remains a well-loved family pet, and many dog enthusiasts enter their pets into the competitions of many kennel clubs.

The breed had been developed and cultivated chiefly in England. When the dog with the distinctive markings was first shown in England in 1862, it was said to have been used as a guard dog and companion to the nomads of Dalmatia. But, nothing is definitely known about its origin. The breed's unique coat became popular and widely distributed over the continent of Europe beginning in 1920.

Particularly in the US, the use of Dalmatians as carriage dogs was transferred to horse-drawn fire engines, although it is unclear why this link was not made in other countries. Today, the Dalmatian serves as a firehouse mascot, but in the days of horse-drawn fire carts, they provided a valuable service. They would run alongside the horses, nipping at their heels to get them to run faster. The horses have long since gone, but the Dalmatians, by tradition, have stayed. As a result, in the US, Dalmatians are commonly known as firehouse dogs. Dalmatians are still chosen by many firefighters as pets, in honor of their heroism in the past. The Dalmatian is also the mascot of the Pi Kappa Alpha International Fraternity. In the past, Pi Kappa Alpha has been known as the firefighters fraternity.

The Dalmatian is also associated, particularly in the US, with Budweiser beer and the Busch Gardens theme parks, since the Anheuser-Busch company's iconic beer wagon, drawn by a team of Clydesdale horses, is always accompanied by a Dalmatian carriage dog. The company maintains several teams at various locations, which tour extensively. According to Anheuser-Busch's website, Dalmatians were historically used by brewers to guard the wagon.

The Dalmatian breed experienced a massive surge in popularity as a result of the 1956 novel *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* written by British author Dodie Smith, and later due to the two Walt Disney films based on the book. The Disney animated classic released in 1961, later spawned a 1996 live-action remake, *101 Dalmatians*. In the years following the release of the second movie, the Dalmatian breed suffered greatly at the hands of irresponsible breeders and inexperienced owners. Many well-meaning enthusiasts purchased Dalmatians—often for their children—without educating themselves on the breed and the responsibilities that come with owning such a high-energy dog breed. Dalmatians were abandoned in large numbers by their original owners and left with animal shelters. As a result, Dalmatian rescue organizations sprang up to care for the unwanted dogs and find them new homes. AKC registrations of Dalmatians decreased 90% during the 2000-2010 period. [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatian_\(dog\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatian_(dog))]

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