

The Joint Dalmatian Clubs issued a statement to accompany the on-line publication of their Submission to the KC regarding the registration of NUA Dalmatians. In it they claim that they spent considerable time in compiling factual data and analysis in respect of what they consider to be an extremely important subject. Nonetheless, their submission needs correction.

Their main objection is that the Dals of the Backcross Project will introduce American levels of deafness into Britain, where lower levels prevail. The AKC's registration of blue-eyed Dalmatians and certain American breeders' persistence in using unilaterally deaf Dalmatians in breeding has indeed resulted in a higher incidence of deafness in American Dals. But the Backcross Project has insisted that all Dals used have had bilateral hearing and fully pigmented (brown) eyes. In doing so, they have adhered to the same standards as those espoused by the Joint Dalmatian Clubs.

This objection is inconsistent in that the Joint Dalmatian Clubs do not object to the KC's accepting AKC-registered Dals who really do have a higher incidence of deafness.

The Clubs' assessment of the level of obstruction by urate stones and crystals in UK Dalmatians is based on an inappropriate use of the KC/BSAVA 2004 Health Survey. They have used the survey as an accurate representation of disease frequency in UK Dalmatians as a whole. In doing so, they have ignored the statement that appears in the breed survey results: **Warning: The results of this survey and particularly the breed-specific analyses should be interpreted with caution. The overall response rate was only 24% with breed-specific response rates from 4.5% to 64.7%. The Dalmatian response rate was 30.6% of those who received a questionnaire.**

You cannot extrapolate this to represent Dalmatians as a whole. In the first place, the survey was sent only to members of the British Dalmatian Club. People who join a breed club show a strong interest in learning more about their dogs. They are kept advised on health issues and how to deal with them. They are far more likely than the average pet owner to be knowledgeable about special diets, drinking schedules, etc., etc. that could help prevent obstruction from stones and crystals.

Then, out of this already select group, those who took the time and effort to complete the survey showed an active interest in the health issues that affect Dalmatians. This further differentiates them from the Dalmatian-owning population as a whole.

We know that, for anatomical reasons, obstructing Dals are almost all male. Yet bitches far outnumber dogs in this sample- 289 to 154. That's only 154 Dals from which the 8 cases of obstruction were likely to come. 154 Dals owned by people actively concerned with Dalmatian health issues and exposed to information regarding the prevention of urate stones and crystals. Even this select group could not prevent about 5% of their dogs from obstructing.

When you consider that the vast majority of Dalmatian owners have never heard of urate stones or purines and so cannot take preventive measures, you understand that the estimate of 2% made by the Joint Clubs is far too low. For the sake of our dogs, we have to recognise that the numbers who do obstruct are likely to be much higher than this.

Whatever the percentage, it is higher than it needs to be. Nor does the Dalmatian have to remain a breed whose health depends on special diets and other husbandry measures that most owners never hear about even from their vets.

The search goes on (and must continue) for other factors in the formation of urate stones and crystals, but the simple fact remains that they cannot form in the absence of hyperuricosuria. The NUA Dals carry the gene that can prevent that. Yes, it will take decades to spread through the Dalmatian population and its presence may never be universal, but that's no reason not to start the project now.

As for there being no photos of the three clear Dalmatians publicly available, please go to <http://normaldals.blogspot.com/>. You'll have to scroll down a good bit to get to them, but you'll get to see many other NUA Dalmatians along the way. We *want* you to see these photos! That's why they are on the internet, the most public place in the world.