

Although I have been a DCA member for only a few years, I have raised and shown Dalmatians since 1987. During that time, I have owned four wonderful Dalmatians, two dogs and two bitches. Both dogs (one a Champion) were from outstanding lines with no stone histories. Despite proper diets, both, unfortunately, developed urinary blockages requiring veterinary intervention; one required surgery. I can state unequivocally from those experiences that not every vet is informed about the urate crystal and stone problem, or the proper treatment. When my first dog developed stones and I was not comfortable with my vet's recommendation, I was fortunate that I could rely on a vast breeder's network that literally extended coast to coast to find a good vet to treat my dog. Not all Dalmatian owners, particularly pet owners, are so lucky. Many don't even remember their breeder's name.

The backcross project is the ONLY solution presented to date that can correct this serious health problem. I have read many of the posts and articles opposing the yes vote, and none offer any solutions to this genetic problem. A yes vote only means further, hopefully rational, discussion. An alternative to the backcross may appear as a consequence of that conversation. The future health of this wonderful breed deserves discussion.

Every informed owner of a male Dal knows their dog is at risk. Every breeder has an obligation to inform prospective owners of that risk, and the cost in money and emotions should the risk be realized. After our first experience, we thought long and hard about whether to ever own another Dalmatian dog.

I'd like to close with an anecdote. While taking my dog's latest urine sample to the vet's office last week, I encountered a woman with a beautiful Bernese Mountain Dog. As many know, these dogs are prone to numerous health problems, which has greatly diminished their popularity, despite their striking beauty and wonderful disposition. Although the dog was healthy, this woman was worried about her dog's future health now that she was a mere six years old, the age at which the problems begin to appear. I think there is a lesson here.

David Bader