



Why are Dalmatians Firehouse Dogs? Here's the Answer in Black and White

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Ever see a fire truck in a parade without a Dalmatian in the seat up front or in the lap of a smiling fireman riding in back? Ever visit a firehouse without having one of those black and white spotted dogs come wagging up to you?

Why is that? Why do Dalmatians and firehouses go together like smoke and fire? The answer is interesting. It all began in the days of stagecoaches. Horse theft was so common back then that many stagecoach drivers strung a hammock between two stalls at night; then slept between their horses to guard against thieves. But, if the driver owned a Dalmatian, he could sleep in the house or the stagecoach hotel, because it was observed that Dalmatians formed an amazingly tight bond with horses. When they became close as with a team, no stranger would dare lay a hand on them.

When horse numbers grew here in the New World, the number of Dalmatians grew with it. And, since every firehouse back then had a set of fast horses to pull the pumper wagon, it became common for each group of firemen to keep a Dalmatian. Again, the spotted dogs not only guarded the firehouse horses, they kept them company during the long, boring wait between fires. And, when they took off for a fire, the dog would run alongside the pumper.

Interestingly, these dogs have spots *everywhere* - even inside their mouths and on the bottom of their paws!

The horses are gone from the fire stations today, but the Dalmatians aren't. The tradition has been carried on, and it may be as much for the looks and appeal of these beautiful dogs as it is for their nostalgic tie to yesteryear. Still, the Dalmatians haven't lost their old status as the fireman's friend. For example, individual fire fighters own Dalmatians named "Hydrant", "Chief", and "Cinder".

That tradition holds across America. Even today, where there's smoke, there's likely fire...and where there's a firehouse, there's likely a Dalmatian.