

The American Pit Bull Terrier Helping to Understand the Breed

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HUMANEK9 dog training firmly believes that every animal deserves a good, loving, lifetime home. Animals are not born “bad,” but unfortunately they often fall victim to people who train them to be mean, aggressive, or destructive. This article will help you to better understand these very misunderstood dogs, the American Pit Bull Terrier, the American Staffordshire Terrier and the Staffordshire Terrier (also known as pit bulls).

A pit bull can make a great family pet, although they are not the dog for everyone. If you think this breed may be for you, ask yourself first if you are willing to learn all you can about them so that you can educate people and handle the negative image and scrutiny when out in public. Also, ask yourself if you will have time to train, socialize, exercise, and provide a safe environment for your dog. Finally, decide whether you’ll be able to make a lifetime commitment to this breed. Only through responsible ownership can we change the image and the future of the pit bull.

The television media, newspapers, worldwide web and other forms of communication spread many myths about this breed. We’d like to help to dispel some of these myths.

Myth # 1: Pit bulls have locking jaws.

Fact: The jaws of a pit bull are constructed the same as any other dog except for the size difference. What they do have is strength and tenacity when they grasp on to something. This is a common trait among the terrier breeds, be it a pit bull or Jack Russell terrier.

Myth # 2: Pit bulls turn on you.

Fact: No dog “turns on you.” Some dogs after they mature might try to challenge their place in the household. Spaying and neutering can help with this; so can obedience training. Remember, no matter what breed of dog you have, small children should always be supervised and taught how to interact properly with dogs and other animals.

Myth # 3: A pit bull that shows aggression toward other animals will go after people next.

Fact: People-aggression is a totally different behavior than animal aggression. Although these dogs can have a high prey drive and they were bred to fight each other, they were originally bred not to be aggressive toward humans. The people who fought their dogs had to be able to reach in and pull their dog out of the “pit.” Dogs that did bite were not bred and were often killed. A pit bull that shows aggression toward a human is not characteristic of the breed. Not only is it inhumane to use animals for purposes of fighting and gambling, it is also a felony in the United States. Whether a person is fighting the animals, breeding them, or attending the fights, he or she is subject to arrest.

Myth # 4: Red nose pit bulls more aggressive.

Fact: Absolutely not. The color of the nose or hair is no indication of temperament. Genetics and environment shape a pit bull’s temperament, not the color of its hair or nose.

According to the American Temperament Test Society statistics for various breeds tested for temperament, the American Pit Bull Terrier had a favorable rating of 84.1%, the American Staffordshire Terrier 83.9% and the Staffordshire Terrier 85.2% which was higher than the Golden Retriever at 83.8%. Some other popular dog breeds were lower than the pit bulls as well, including the Yorkshire Terrier 81.1%, German Shepherd 83.3%, Beagle 79.7% and Dachshund 66.7%.

This temperament test focuses on stability, shyness, aggressiveness, friendliness, and the dog's ability to distinguish between threatening and non-threatening situations. For additional information on the test and a complete listing of breeds, you can visit www.atts.org.

The pit bull has many excellent attributes. The breed is energetic, playful, comical, loyal, eager to please, intelligent, easy to train, tenacious, strong and athletic, bonds well with people and is very loving. The pit bull can, however, exhibit aggression with other animals -- especially other dogs. Do not allow your pit bull off leash, especially in a dog park. Tolerance for other animals varies from dog to dog and can change as the pit bull reaches maturity, which is between two and three years of age. Even if your pit bull is friendly with other dogs, do not leave your pit bull unattended when he or she is playing with another dog. Additionally, avoid having food or toys available that may lead to competing for them with another dog.

The pit bull excels in obedience training, agility, fly ball, and weight pulling. Some pit bulls are used as Search and Rescue dogs, Pet Therapy dogs, and Drug Sniffing dogs.

For information on training your pit bull, please contact HUMANEK9 at 954.288.1021 or visit us at www.humanek9.com.

Now that you know the facts, please use this information to educate others and help us to help a much discriminated-against and highly misunderstood breed...the pit bull.

A comment on this article from Alan Davis, Director, Broward County's Animal Care & Regulation Division...

"From an Animal Care stand point I offer the following: I think there is some good information in there such as the part on keeping the dog under control on leash. It could have been mentioned that these dogs are capable of far more damage than the average dog so extra caution needs to be exercised however that is probably not what the article wishes to convey. The part about a dog never being born bad is not true. The writer states later in the article a dog's nature is determined by a combination of genes and environment and the percentage of each varies between individuals. If you have a dog born with a powerful set of genes predisposing to aggressive viciousness that is not going to change. We have all seen these dogs that are bad to the bone and it does bother me that some individuals want to deny this because cause ultimately it puts the public at risk. Many pits make wonderful pets but they are not for everyone."