



BULLIE BUDDIES OF LAS VEGAS

PIT BULL RESCUE

Animals are a lifetime commitment; they are not disposable.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT PIT BULL DOGS

Written by Steph - Animal Rescue Cooperation, reprinted with permission

www.animalrescuecooperation.org

"This dog is smart, playful, affectionate and loves to sit and watch TV. I've had many other kinds of dogs, but this one is calmer than a Lab or a golden retriever and easier to train."

~Susan O'Rourke, pit bull owner, "Man's Best Friend"

Pit Bull Myths

- MYTH: All Pit Bulls are mean and vicious.

It is reported on temperament tests conducted by the American Temperament Test Society that Pit Bulls had a passing rate of 95% -- compared to only 77% of the general dog population. (Beagles scored 78.2%, and Golden Retrievers scored 83.2%) These temperament tests consist of putting a dog through a series of unexpected situations, some involving strangers. Any signs of unprovoked aggression or panic in these situations result in failure of the test. The achievement of Pit Bulls in this study disproves that they are inherently aggressive to people. (Please visit ATTS.org)

- MYTH: A Pit Bull that shows aggression towards an animal will go for people next.

"Many working breeds have antipathy towards other animals - coonhounds go mad at the sight of a raccoon, foxhounds will not hesitate to tear a dog-like fox to shreds, greyhounds live to chase and maul rabbits and even dog-like coyotes. Even the ever-friendly beagle will slaughter a rabbit, given the chance. And yet the greyhound, coon and foxhound and beagle are among the friendliest of breeds towards humans. And it is the same with the pit bulldog. His work through the years has been control of other animals - never humans. A correct pit bull is more often than not submissive toward all humans, and adores children. A pit bull that snarls, lunges or growls at non-threatening humans is NOT typical of the breed." (Written by Diane Jessup) Pit bulls that do show aggressive behavior towards humans are not typical of the breed and should be humanely euthanized.

- MYTH: If a Pit Bull was never trained to fight, it will be safe with other dogs.

Pit Bulls can live peacefully with other dogs and animals. However, the Pit Bull has historically been bred to take down large animals. Early and continual socialization can help a Pit Bull be more animal friendly. Genetics, however, play an important role in how the dog will respond to other dogs and animals. A Pit Bull that will fight another dog if unattended is a normal Pit Bull. Even if a Pit Bull does not start the fight, it has

the potential to seriously injure or kill a dog once in the fight. The Pit Bull has been bred to not back down and withstand pain until the goal is met. This quality does not carry true in all Pit Bulls, but it is safe to assume it is a potential in any Pit Bull in order to avoid unnecessary problems.

Pit Bulls have a late maturity, and a Pit Bull that was dog friendly at 7 months old may suddenly show signs of intolerance of unfamiliar dogs around two years old. Spaying and neutering the dog may help to prevent "turning on" the genetic urge to fight another dog. All dog fights are preventable, however. Socialize a Pit Bull slowly with new dogs, and never let them play unattended. Remove items such as toys and food bowls to avoid stress. Pit Bulls can live happily with other pets; if not left unattended. Even the "best of friends" can fight, and the outcome may be tragic. This can be true for dogs that have been together for years. Often, after the first serious fight, relations between the dogs are never the same. Keeping that first fight from happening is a great way to ensure peaceful relations for the long run. If there is a multiple-dog household, it is important to separate the dogs when there is no one home. Many people use crates for short times, put dogs into separate rooms, use kennels, or have outdoor

areas set up for separation that are safe and secure. Pit Bulls can get along wonderfully with animals like cats, rabbits, and ferrets, but for safety's sake, never leave them alone together.

- MYTH: American Pit Bull Terriers have 1600 P.S.I. in jaw pressure.

Dr. Lehr Brisbin of the University of Georgia states, "To the best of our knowledge, there are no published scientific studies that would allow any meaningful comparison to be made of the biting power of various breeds of dogs. There are, moreover, compelling technical reasons why such data describing biting power in terms of 'pounds per square inch' can never be collected in a meaningful way. All figures describing biting power in such terms can be traced to either unfounded rumor or, in some cases, to newspaper articles with no foundation in factual data."

- MYTH: American Pit Bull Terriers lock their jaws.

Dr. Brisbin: "The few studies which have been conducted of the structure of the skulls, mandibles and teeth of pit bulls show that, in proportion to their size, their jaw structure and thus its inferred functional morphology, is no different than that of any breed of dog. There is absolutely no evidence for the existence of any kind of 'locking mechanism' unique to the structure of the jaw and/or teeth of the American Pit Bull Terrier."

- MYTH: Treadmills are only used to get dogs ready to fight.

Many responsible owners utilize treadmills to help exercise their dogs. This is useful in places where weather prevents outdoor exercise, or in situations where off-leash exercise is not an option. The treadmill is used by people that show their Pit Bulls, and do sporting activities like weight pull and agility to help keep their dogs in shape.

Because Pit Bulls are athletic animals, responsibly using a treadmill can help them be healthier and happier.

- MYTH: Pit Bulls brains swell/never stop growing.

This rumor started with the Doberman, and has since been said about game-bred dogs in general. The concept of an animal's brain swelling or growing too large and somehow causing the animal to "go crazy" is not based in truth in any way. Their brains grow at the same rate as any other dog, and the only time that a Pit Bull's brain is going to swell is if it receives a serious injury. If an animal's brain were to grow too big for its head, the animal would die.

- MYTH: A Pit Bull that was used to fight other dogs is not safe with people.

Pit Bulls that have fought other dogs are not more dangerous than any other dog based on their past experiences. There are unsafe dogs of all breeds due to poor breeding or response to abuse/neglect, but dogs that are not safe to be pets display certain characteristics that are signs that the dog should be evaluated.

- MYTH: It is unsafe to get a Pit Bull from a rescue or shelter because their past/genetics are unknown.

Under the best of circumstances, it is great to know the history of a dog, the history and health of its parents, and what that line of dogs were bred for. If a person is buying a Pit Bull from a breeder, this information should be of top importance. However, in most shelter/rescue cases this information is not available. The Pit Bull at the shelter will often be a wonderful pet. It is important to know the general behavior of the dog. Has it shown any aggression towards humans? Most Pit Bull rescues will not accept or adopt out Pit Bulls with any level of aggression or excessive shyness towards humans. How does this dog do with other dogs? Has it shown any undesirable behavior or habits? It is suggested that a potential adopter of a Pit Bull bring the whole family to meet the dog. Often, shelters and rescues will allow you to take the dog for a home visit to see how they respond to the new surroundings. Most adoptions of a Pit

Bull are amazing successes, and the adopter is not only receiving a pet, but they are also saving a life!

- MYTH: It is best to get a puppy so that you can make it behave how you want it to.

Many people feel if they get a Pit Bull as a puppy they can train it to not be aggressive towards other dogs and increase the likelihood that the dog will have no undesirable behavior qualities. Puppies can be a lot of fun and very rewarding, but with a new puppy there is no way of knowing how that dog will act as an adult.

One benefit of adopting a young adult or full grown Pit Bull is the ability to avoid the uncomfortable puppy behavior stage. This includes constant destructive chewing, house breaking, excessive and uncontrollable energy, teething and puppy biting, possible whining, howling, and barking for attention at night, and the time and effort it takes to begin teaching general manners and obedience.

Another benefit is that an adopter can know how an adult Pit Bull will do with other dogs, cats, children, car rides, and other certain situations. Bringing a puppy up in the most loving and social environment can only alter its predetermined genetic urges so much. In other words, having a dog since puppyhood does not necessarily mean it will have all of the qualities desired in a pet. It may end up having some traits that are undesirable. An adult Pit Bull, however, will have more of an established personality, and an adopter can know what to expect with the dog.

Pit Bull Temperment

- How are Pit Bulls with People?

A correct Pit Bull will never be aggressive with people. The Pit Bull has been bred for centuries to be a human-friendly dog. It is not a guardian breed, and therefore should not display suspicion towards strangers or view them as potential threats. It is uncommon for a Pit Bull to be overly shy. The Pit Bull is likely to meet all strangers with an open heart and a wagging tail. A normal Pit Bull looks upon all people as friends unless their actions prove otherwise. Generally Pit Bulls are submissive with people and confident in their surroundings, making for a well-adjusted family dog.

Since times past when the Pit Bull was used for hunting of large game and as a farm dog, it has been a cherished fixture of family life. The Pit Bull has a special fondness for children and a pleased, relaxed look crosses its face when they approach. It can prove to be a safe, hardy friend that can keep up and put up with the active play life of kids. For a child, no better companion can be found.

It is reported on temperament tests conducted by the American Temperament Test Society that Pit Bulls had a passing rate of 95% -- compared to only 77% of the general dog population. (Beagles scored 78.2%, and Golden Retrievers scored 83.2%) These temperament tests consist of putting a dog through a series of unexpected situations, some involving strangers. Any signs of unprovoked aggression or panic in these situations result in failure of the test. (Please visit ATTS.org)

A Pit Bull that snarls, lunges, or growls at humans is not typical of the breed, and to keep such a dog endangers people and the image of the breed. If a Pit Bull or Pit Bull mix shows any signs of aggression towards humans, it is strongly suggested that the dog be humanely euthanized in order to avoid possible human injury. Responsible rescues will not place dogs into homes if they are aware of any aggressive behaviors in the dog towards people.

- How are Pit Bulls with Other Dogs?

The Pit Bull is a purpose-bred dog. Historically, Pit Bulls were bred as a hunting dog of large game. Later, the Pit Bull served as a farm dog and butcher's tool for taking down bulls for slaughter. Later still, the dog was bred to fight other dogs for money and entertainment. This purpose-breeding has given the Pit Bull possible behavior attributes that may not be desirable to all prospective owners. The Pit Bull is strong, intelligent, and has been bred for a willingness to "test their mettle" against larger

animals and other dogs. It is not uncommon for Pit Bulls to not get along with other dogs; especially dogs of the same sex and dogs that are not neutered or spayed. This by far is not always the case with this breed, but the predisposition for varying levels of dog-aggressive behavior is very much there.

It is important for the potential owner of a Pit Bull to be realistic with their expectations of their new dog, and to be prepared to have a wonderful family dog that may not be able to socialize with other dogs. This is especially true of someone that is adopting or buying a puppy. A benefit to adopting a young adult or full grown Pit Bull is that their behavior is more fixed and reliable. Contrary to what many well-intentioned but incorrectly informed new owners

think, a Pit Bull's behavior is not influenced only by how you raise them. Puppies from the same litter that receive the same love and socialization will range from being completely non dog-aggressive even when provoked or attacked, to dogs that will go out of their way to start a fight with any dog if not restrained. Dog aggression is common with all terriers. It is a trait also held by the Rottweiler, Akita, Malamute, and Doberman.

The Pit Bull does not fully mature until over two years of age. Due to this late maturity, some Pit Bulls that were dog-friendly as puppies will begin to show intolerance of unfamiliar dogs as they get older. This does not mean that the dog cannot play with other dogs, but it may mean that the Pit Bull should stick to dog playmates that it already knows. In some cases, Pit Bulls that were friendly with other dogs when younger will be unable to be with any dogs later in life. This is not common, but it is something that every responsible Pit Bull owner must consider. Having a Pit Bull neutered or spayed can greatly reduce the chances of intolerance occurring.

Although many Pit Bulls get along well with other dogs, it is dangerous to expect all Pit Bulls to do so in all situations. (This is true with all other breeds, as well.) A Pit Bull that is very dog-friendly may seriously injure or kill another dog if a fight is started. Because of this, the best way to keep dogs safe while they play is to take steps to decrease the chances of a fight starting.

It is always a good idea to introduce any dog to a new dog slowly, and on leash. Many people feel that it is best to pick a neutral ground, like a back yard of a house where neither of the dogs resides. It is wise to first eliminate things like food bowls and toys that can trigger a fight. Offering two of the same toy, such as two tennis balls, may reduce possible tension during play. Pit Bulls can play very well with dogs of all breeds and sizes, but it is important to

supervise all playtime. Through supervision, the owners can step in if play is too rough or if tension arises, avoiding a possible fight.

It is vital that Pit Bulls be supervised when with other dogs. This is even true for dogs that have grown up together or get along perfectly. After a serious fight, relations

between the dogs may never be the same, increasing tension and the chance for more fighting. If a fight does happen, a Pit Bull can inflict serious damage to another dog very quickly. If a Pit Bull is left at home with another dog, the dogs need to be separated.

Although not always the case, dogs tend to be more relaxed and less prone to aggression when interacting with a dog of the opposite sex. This is a good thing to keep in mind when considering bringing a new dog into a household that already has a family dog.

Many people have great success in having a Pit Bull in a multiple-dog household. Some Pit Bulls will not tolerate other dogs, but more often Pit Bulls enjoy having canine family members. Some people believe that the easiest way to ensure success with having more than one dog in a household is to get them as puppies and raise them together. This method can work, but it is not always successful. Due to the varying degrees of intolerance for dogs that can be acquired genetically, raising puppies together is not a guarantee for compatibility. Many dogs end up in shelters due to intolerance towards the other family dog as they mature.

A risk must be assessed when bringing a Pit Bull puppy home into a house with other dogs, or bringing two puppies home together. An owner needs to understand that they may have a situation as the Pit Bull matures where the dogs cannot be together safely. This usually is not the case, however being unprepared for this possibility is not fair to the dogs involved. When bringing home a Pit Bull puppy, the new owner needs to assume responsibility for the breeds predisposed behavior and make a commitment to keep it safe and happy for its entire life no matter what may arise.

Having puppies of separate sexes, and having them altered before full maturity may decrease some of the chances for aggressive behavior. Making efforts to keep tension and fighting from starting is very important. Feed the dogs separately, even if they seem to share a food bowl without problems. Be cautious when offering raw meat, bones, and special treats to have the dogs separated. Having duplicates of favorite toys can help eliminate the dogs feeling the need to guard from each other. Interacting with the dogs equally can help keep them from feeling a need to compete for attention. Activities such as going for walks together, playing ball in the yard, going to the river for a swim, or lying on the couch side by side for petting during a movie are ways to enjoy the dogs together and thus strengthen the bond with the dogs and with the owners.

Socialization while the dogs are young is important as well. Exposing puppies to a variety of situations together in a positive way will help them be confident dogs as they grow up. Dogs that are feeling fearful or insecure are more likely to act aggressively towards each other or other dogs.

Many Pit Bull owners have found success in bringing older Pit Bulls into a home that already has a dog (either Pit Bull or other breed). By doing this the new owner has a general idea of the new Pit Bull's behavior with other dogs, and knows the behavior of

their first dog, as well. There are many success stories from people that adopt through a rescue or animal shelter that have used this method.

Another idea to keep in mind when considering adding another dog to the family is foster care. Many rescues and shelters are in great need of foster families for dogs. This allows a family the chance to get used to having more dogs, gives time for the existing dog to adjust to having a canine family member, and may help the decision on which dog to adopt or if the family is ready to adopt another dog. The greatest benefit to fostering is that a life is being saved. Fostered dogs are no longer in the shelter risking euthanasia, and once a dog is in a foster home, another dog can have the chance for a foster family.

- What is "Dog-Aggressive"?

Dog-aggression is the term commonly used to describe behaviors with a dog that is intolerant of other dogs. Any dog can be dominant, fearful, prey-driven, or aggressive with other dogs. A dog with any of these responses may be considered dog-aggressive.

Although the term "dog-aggressive" may be used to blanket over several different types of behaviors and responses, the methods handling each can be quite different.

An understanding of the individual pet is important. An understanding of the pet's breed is important, as well, since there are many breeds of dogs that have a predisposition to being dominant, fearful, prey-driven, or aggressive with other dogs.

A dog that is aggressive with other dogs does not disqualify it as a safe, loving, stable family pet. A dog's drive to be intolerant or aggressive with other dogs is not related to a tendency to be dangerous with people. It is not reasonable to expect a dog to get along with all dogs all of the time, even dogs that have previously enjoyed the company of other dogs.

In its history, the Pit Bull was bred selectively for the dog-aggression attribute as an asset. When getting a Pit Bull or mix as a pet, the owner needs to know this and have a healthy respect for the possible dog-aggressive tendencies that their new pet may have. Not all Pit Bulls will be dog-aggressive. However, all Pit Bulls can be intolerant of a type of dog (the same sex, a small or large dog, unaltered dogs, etc), or just one dog in particular. This intolerance can happen with any dog of any breed; however, the Pit Bull type dog also has inherited the mass and strength to cause serious harm to another dog very quickly.

Some Pit Bulls seem to have very strong dog aggression even as puppies. These dogs often cannot safely live with other dogs unless they are securely separated from the other canine family members. It is not realistic for an owner to think that they can socialize or train this drive out of their puppy. The puppy may not develop aggression towards other dogs, but a puppy that will challenge adult dogs often has strong genetic dog aggression. There is a difference in puppy rough play or learn boundaries, and a puppy that has an aggressive drive for other dogs.

Other times, a Pit Bull will develop aggressive qualities with other dogs as they mature. A Pit Bull that once got along well with other dogs may become less tolerant of new dogs as they get older. In some cases, a Pit Bull that was friendly with dogs before will become seriously aggressive with them as they age. There is no prevention for this, but early socialization and early altering can help. Spaying and neutering can help avoid some of the intolerance for other dogs, as there are not strong hormones and body smells affecting the dog.

Pit Bulls can also live many years without incident, and then have an aggressive reaction triggered by another dog. This is sometimes called "turning on", since after the initial incident the dog may never react the same around other dogs again; much like someone has flipped a switch and 'turned the dog on'. An owner can take steps to help prevent situations with other dogs that will engender aggressive responses from their Pit Bull pals.

This serious dog-aggression alone is no reason why the dog could not be a wonderful family pet. No relation exists between the aggression a Pit Bull has towards other dogs and unsafe behavior with people.

It is unfair of an owner to expect a seriously dog-aggressive pet to get along with other dogs. It is up to the owner to adjust their life around their pet, as a responsible Pit Bull owner knows before they get their dog that their new pet may become aggressive with other dogs.

There are some bloodlines that carry a larger chance for the dog-aggressive drive to surface. Likewise, there are people that breed Pit Bulls for dog aggressive qualities either on purpose or due to not being selective with the dogs that they mate.

- How are Pit Bulls with Other Animals?

Pit Bulls are like every dog in the sense that they can easily get along with other animals, and can just as easily harm or kill those animals. There are several things to take into consideration.

Pit Bulls even from the same litter will have varying degrees of "pray drive". Pray drive is a genetic quality that makes dogs driven to chase and kill animals. Even dogs with high pray drives can coexist with other animals, but it demands a constant responsibility of the owner. Obedience training is a must for all dogs, but can be very helpful for an owner of a highly pray driven dog. Having a dog that responds to general obedience commands like "leave it", "heal", "off", "sit", "down", and "drop it" or "out" can help the owner keep other animals safe from their dog. The owners of a dog with high pray drive must ensure that access to other animals is kept from their dog. In other words, the dog is put into a different room if the ferrets are let out, the chickens have a coop that is secure, or that the family cat lives in a room where the dog is not able to enter. Also, a dog with high pray drive must be kept on leash when on walks. If the dog is not secure or not walked on lead and kills another animal, that dog may face mandated euthanasia in some locations.

Early socialization with other animals can help create a relationship of friendliness or tolerance between a dog and other animals. This socialization will not cease the development of intolerance in a highly prey driven dog, but that is usually more of an exception than the standard. Although many Pit Bulls can and do get along very well with other animals, it is important to understand before bringing a puppy home that ownership involves a willingness and ability to make adjustments if the dog does not tolerate other animals.

A benefit to adopting an older puppy or full grown Pit Bull is that many of their behaviors will have begun to show themselves. Many rescues and some shelters will know how the dogs respond to other animals. Rescues often have Pit Bulls available that have lived in family situation foster homes. A potential adopter that has other animals can ask to meet the Pit Bulls for adoption that have shown good behavior with other animals.

- If a Pit Bull is mean with cats or other dogs, will it be mean with people?

"Do not assume that because a dog can be quarrelsome with other dogs that he is 'vicious' will attack children, or has to be tied out with logging chains in the backyard and not treated as a pet. Many working breeds have antipathy towards other animals - coonhounds go mad at the sight of a raccoon, foxhounds will not hesitate to tear a dog-like fox to shreds, greyhounds love to chase and maul rabbits and even dog-like coyotes. Even the ever-friendly beagle will slaughter a rabbit, given the chance. Yet the greyhound, coon and foxhound, and beagle are among the friendliest of breeds towards humans. It is the same with the pit bulldog. His work through the years has been control of other animals - never humans." (Written by Diane Jessup)

- Why Is My Pit Bull Mean to Other Dogs Only While On Leash?

Some dogs get along very well with other dogs, but will show protective or dominant behavior when on a leash. This is commonly called "leash aggression". Leash aggression can happen in any breed or mix; not just Pit Bulls. Dogs with leash aggression should not socialize with other dogs when on a leash. It is important for a dog with leash aggression to have solid obedience training, and respond to their owners demand to ignore other dogs and to sit and lay down when told. Other than a responsibility to have strong obedience, there is no reason why a dog with leash aggression should have difficulties going for walks or living with the family.

One thing that can help a family with a dog that has leash aggression is to enroll in a dog training program. There are many styles available for obedience training. It is advised to look into several of these types and find what works best for the whole family. In some of these situations dogs are together in a class – on leash. The trainer can help you to get your dog manageable in on-leash situations with other dogs present.

It is a good idea to make sure that the trainer or classes that are looked into have experience with Pit Bulls.