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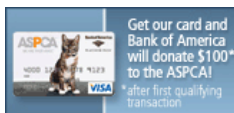
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The Truth About Pit Bulls

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What Is a Pit Bull?

There's a great deal of confusion associated with the label "pit bull." This isn't surprising because the term doesn't describe a single breed of dog. Depending on whom you ask, it can refer to just a couple of breeds or to as many as five—and all mixes of these breeds. The most narrow and perhaps most accurate definition of the term "pit bull" refers to just two breeds: the American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT) and the American Staffordshire Terrier (AmStaff). Some people include the Bull Terrier, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier and the American Bulldog in this group because these breeds share similar head shapes and body types. However, they are distinct from the APBT and the AmStaff.

Because of the vagueness of the "pit bull" label, many people may have trouble recognizing a pit bull when they see one. Multiple breeds are commonly mistaken for pit bulls, including the Boxer, the Presa Canario, the Cane Corso, the Dogo Argentino, the Tosa Inu, the Bullmastiff, the Dogue de Bordeaux, the Alapaha Blue Blood Bulldog and the Olde English Bulldogge. Think you can accurately identify a pit bull? Test yourself by following this link: http://www.understand-a-bull.com/Findthebull/findpitbull_v3.html.

The Pit Bull's History

Origins

The pit bull's ancestors hail from England and were brought to North America by English immigrants. These descendants were bred from the bulldog, which some breed historians believe originally served as a "gripping dog" for hunters of large game. (The term "bulldog" does not refer to the American Kennel Club's English Bulldog. This more recently developed breed serves as a loyal companion rather than a working dog.) Later, bulldogs were likely used as butcher's dogs and helped control large livestock. Eventually, these dogs were bred to participate in an inhumane blood sport called "baiting." Spectators found it highly entertaining to watch bulldogs pitted against bulls, bears and other large animals. During these violent events, one or more dogs were expected to attack another animal, biting it around the face and head. The dogs usually maintained their grip until the animal became exhausted from fighting and loss of blood. After animal baiting was banned in the early 1800s, people began pitting dogs against each other, and the cruel sport of dog fighting was born. As it grew in popularity, enthusiasts developed a lighter, more agile dog for the fighting ring. Some people bred their bulldogs with black and tan terriers, creating dogs who were only 25 to 30 pounds. Others may have simply selected smaller bulldogs for breeding purposes. These dogs were the forebears of the present-day pit bull.

The Pit Bull Today

Most experts agree that today's pit bull is a short-coated dog characterized by a wide skull, powerful jaws and a muscular, stocky body. But there is great variation in the pit bull's appearance. Typically 35 to 65 pounds, some weigh as little as 25 pounds, while others tip the scales at 80 pounds or more. Some have bulkier frames and colossal skulls; others have leaner, more muscular bodies. All are strong and athletic. With their impressive stamina and staunch work ethic, pit bulls enjoy a variety of activities, including agility, disc dog competitions, flyball, freestyle and competition obedience. They often excel in weight-pulling contests and schutzhund. Some pit bulls work cattle in herding trials, and some still function as hunting dogs.

The Pit Bull Temperament

Dog breeds are characterized by certain behavioral traits. Each breed was developed to perform a specific job, whether it be hunting rabbits, retrieving downed birds, herding livestock or sitting on people's laps. When developing a breed, breeders select only those dogs who perform their job best to produce the next generation.

Physical abilities and behavior are both important facets of any breed. A well-bred dog should have both the physical attributes necessary to perform his job and the behavioral tendencies needed to learn it. It's not surprising that individuals of a specific breed tend to look and behave somewhat similarly. However, it's important to realize that even though a breed may be characterized by certain behaviors, individuals of the same breed can vary tremendously. Some dogs are courageous, while others are timid. Some dogs



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