

Myth: Pit Bull Terriers have Locking Jaws.

Fact: From Dr. I Lehr Brisbin of the University of Georgia: 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 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: Pit Bulls attack without warning.

Fact: A well-bred dog of any breed will not attack without warning. Just like with any breed dog the Pit Bull will show signs before attacking. (i.g. barking, the hair of the scruff will stand.) In 99.9% of the cases a well-bred Pit Bull will not be human aggressive (HA). When these dogs were first being bred the dog men of the past did not accept HA as an acceptable trait in the APBT breed. Now dog aggression (DA) and animal aggression (AA) is another story. These dogs were bred to fight for many years. Responsible owners should to keep their Pit Bulls away from strange dogs or other animals. A dog can only fail if the owner sets it up to do so. This is not stating that every dog will have a game drive. I personally have three Pit Bulls that all live together while supervised of course.

Myth: Treadmills are only used to get dogs ready for a fight.

Fact: There are responsible owners of many breeds who utilize treadmills to exercise their dogs. A treadmill is useful for providing exercise where or when outdoor exercise is not an option. Many people involved in showing their dogs use treadmills to condition their dogs before a show.

Myth: All Pit Bulls are mean and vicious.

Fact: It is reported on temperament tests conducted by the American Temperament Test Society that Pit Bulls had a passing rate of 82% or better -- compared to only 77% of the general dog population. 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.

Fact: 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.

Fact: 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

Fact: 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: Pit Bulls brains swell & never stop growing.

Fact: 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 serious injury. If an animal's brain were to grow too big for its head, the animal would die.

Myth: It is unsafe to get a Pit Bull from a shelter because their past is unknown.

Fact: 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.

Fact: 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.

Myth: Pit bulls are naturally aggressive

Fact: Generally speaking, all dogs are, by definition, territorial predators. All dogs are “naturally aggressive” to some extent, as it is through “aggressive” behaviors like fighting, defending, hunting, guarding, barking, biting, and posturing that dogs’ predecessors survived. These behaviors are also the reason why humans domesticated dogs in the first place. Dogs have long been bred and used for hunting, protection, fighting, and guarding. Thus, aggression is a natural component of all dogs’ behavior. However, it is important to stress that aggression is not a state of being or a temperament (which would be solely affected by genetics). Aggression is a behavior. Behavior is the product of both genetics and environment (the way a dog is or is not raised and trained, and the circumstances a dog is put in by its owner). Therefore, a dog’s breed alone does not and cannot shape behavior. Socialization, training, management, and proper care—or lack thereof—can have a strong influence on a dog’s behavior. Because a

dog's owner determines the situations a dog faces, the dog's owner has total control over whether a dog has the opportunity or the inclination to exhibit aggression.

It is also important to differentiate between different types of aggression. Aggression is a complex behavior that has many different causes and manifests in a variety of ways. Aggression does not necessarily equal danger to the public. Dogs are predators, and many will kill "prey" such as birds, cats, and rodents. This type of aggression does not automatically translate to aggression toward humans (including babies and children), though the media is filled with quotes from fearful citizens saying "It was a cat this time, but it could have been my grandbaby!" Many dogs are protective of their food or toys; this does not mean they are also prey-aggressive or human-aggressive.

Myth: Certain breeds of dogs turn on their victims suddenly and without warning.

Fact: Such a myth indicates the average person's complete lack of knowledge about dog behavior and body language. There is always a reason for a dog's behavior. The lead-up to overt aggressive behavior usually proceeds in a very structured way, starting with low-level signals like flattened ears or tucked tail, proceeding through "whale eyes" or quiet growls, and if these signs are not acknowledged, the dog will resort to snapping, barking, or biting. When a person misses the early warning signs, it may appear that the dog is suddenly biting for no apparent reason. This is true for all dogs.

Myth: There is an epidemic of severe and fatal dog attacks in the United States.

Fact: Karen Delise, author of *Fatal Dog Attacks*, founder of the National Canine Research Council and dog bite expert, states that there has been no significant increase in the number of fatalities during this decade as compared to previous decades.

From as far back as the late 1800s, every generation has perceived themselves in the midst of a "dog bite epidemic". For well over a century, newspapers have printed editorials from both the public and authorities on how to address the "increasing" number of dog attacks...

Severe dog attacks have always been unusual occurrences – and fatal dog attacks have always been exceedingly rare occurrences, (especially when considering the human population, the dog population, the frequency of exposure and myriad of situations in which the two species interact).

While any case of a fatal dog attack is a tragic occurrence, the number of fatal attacks (past or present) does not support the claim of an epidemic. The small number of fatal dog attacks has increased only proportionate to the increase in the human and dog populations.

From National Canine Research Council: An "Epidemic" of Dog Bites?

Myth: It's easy to identify a pit bull. People do it all the time.

Fact: The vagueness of the term pit bull contributes to the difficulty in accurately identifying one. The definition of "pit bull" varies significantly from one person to the next. What I consider a "pit bull" is not likely to be the same as what you consider to be a "pit bull." Any short-haired dog may be considered a "pit bull" by somebody, somewhere.

BSL proponents argue that breed identification is easy, because even pit bull owners know when their dog is a "pit bull." In fact, this is not true. Most dog owners really don't know what type of dog they own, especially if they have adopted the dog.

Our society expects and demands that all dogs be given some sort of breed label. If the owner refuses to do it, someone else will inevitably do it for them.

Dog owners who do not know their dog's ancestry will usually pick the breed mix or designation that seems most suitable to them. Sometimes this is based on what the owner him or herself decides the dog will be. Sometimes this is based on the designation selected by an animal shelter or veterinarian.

Sometimes this is based on judgments passed by society (such as when two passersby say "nice Lab" and one says "nice Rottweiler"—the owner might decide the dog is a Lab/Rottie mix).

Such tenuous labels can change depending on who does subsequent assessment. An owner might have been told by the animal shelter that their dog is an English Mastiff mix, only to be informed by their vet that the dog is actually a Cane Corso. Someone may have paid for a purebred Dogo Argentino only to have a dog warden declare it a "pit bull."

None of these methods of breed identification are scientific or objective; they rely solely on visual assessment of the dog.