

Catahoula Bulldog OR NOT Catahoula Bulldog, That Is The Question

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CB Or Not CB, That Is The Question

A guide for selecting, breeding, and evaluating the authenticity of Catahoula Bulldogs and their breeders.

Beautiful dogs are often destined to fall into the hands of uneducated, inexperienced, or less-than-desirable humans. With the world of cyberspace providing a medium in which lesser known or more rare dogs are becoming more uncovered and advertised, it is now easy for anyone on a Google search to find a unique and attractive canine. In addition, people have a medium to advertise and market the breeding and selling of once rare breed dogs, increasing the population. This, among other things, has increased the popularity and awareness of the catahoula bulldog. Unfortunately with this increased popularity comes increased cases of mistaken identity, and of decreased quality. This is written as a guide to increase the knowledge and awareness of breeders, owners, and prospective enthusiasts of the real catahoula bulldog as well as a few guidelines for choosing a breeder or dog no matter the breed.

What Is A Catahoula Bulldog

A catahoula bulldog is a recognized hybrid between the American bulldog and Louisiana catahoula leopard dog. The cross began with hunting and working dogs down south, for a specific purpose. They were not bred to improve either breed, but rather, to gain certain characteristics that you may not get by leaving the two separate. The first thing you should be aware of is an authentic catahoula bulldog is only a hybrid in which an American bulldog is used, no other bulldog breed or type crossed with a catahoula is a true catahoula bulldog. The most common mistake, whether it be from the person being dishonest or simply uneducated, is trying to pass off a dog as a catahoula bulldog when it's not. Some common crosses made that are often mistaken for a real catahoula bulldogs are a catahoula and Olde

English Bulldog (called Catahoula Bulldog), Alapaha Blue Blood Bulldog (called Catahoula Bulldog, or Alacat Bulldog), or American Bulldog crosses then crossed with a Catahoula.

But It's Registered

Something very important to remember is this: just because a dog is registered doesn't mean it is authentic, many times it doesn't mean much at all. Today there are hundreds of clubs, organizations, associations, and registries that accept and document the lineage or ownership of dogs. An ever increasing trend of the dog world is that of "designer breeds." A "designer breed" is a cross between two or more types or breeds of dogs, labeled with a name, and then marketed to the public. Some common "designer breeds" as an example are Golden doodles (Golden Retriever/Standard Poodle), Chiweenie (Chihuahua/Dachshund), Daniff (Great Dane/Mastiff) Yorkipoo (Yorkshire Terrier/Toy Poodle) and Bugg (Boston Terrier/Pug) to name a few.

There are numerous "registries" that will recognize these and many other "designer breeds," or really any dog at all. Why would they do so when it's only a cross or of unverified parentage? Many small registries or associations that recognize a multitude of hybrid or "designer" dogs, are geared toward one thing, money. Many are tools used by puppy mill or puppy-mill-type breeders that put out a large number of puppies per year, and need other grounds on which they may be able to sell more puppies, for higher prices.

There are some tips and tools to identify and avoid a registry like this. One major identifying factor is an absence of rules or guidelines, or a lax basis on which you may register a dog or litter. This includes no written breed standards or no un-written standard to which the dogs are held in order to be registered, and especially no request for an extended pedigree. Another factor is the absence of shows or other venues in which the members of the association or registry may come together and compete with or showcase their dogs. A good registry is more than just a person who takes your money and mails out a piece of paper; it should be a basis for record holding and betterment of a breed of dog, including keeping the heritage and integrity pure and true. They should have and hold high standards for the animals they

represent, and have the best interest of the preservation of the animals as their goal.

Registering a dog is black and white, either it is eligible or it's not, if there is ever a question as to the authenticity of a dog, then it should not be registered. Does the registry of a dog dictate the quality or purpose of the dog, no, but it is a universal way of presenting the quality or kind of dog it is. Some registries that are of questionable nature will do everything I mentioned above, but have slipshod guidelines, or a grey area, as to what they will register as what, or incorrect use of guidelines and rules, such as 5/8ths rules. Registries with a history of misuse or non credibility spread that to other registries too, any registry that allows dogs from the questionable registry into their registry then also hold to the questionable legitimacy that registry has created for all dogs they register. When choosing an organization to use, or if registered dogs are important to you, be very careful of the legitimacy of which ever group you choose to pay into.

How To Select A Breeder, Or Where You Will Buy Your Dog

With an ever increasing demand for the beautiful catahoula bulldog, so we see a rise in the supply, and "suppliers." The quality of the dog you choose to bring into your home or into your working program is very important, and the honesty and integrity of the breeder of that dog is number one on my list. While shopping for a "breeder" here are a few red flags that I would like to point out, these can be found on websites, in advertising, on facebook pages or other social mediums, over the phone, etc.: the breeder excessively or exclusively mentioning coat or eye color, especially before other important factors (such as health and personality), the breeder only/repeatedly mentioning puppies instead of adults or 'finished products' (which would make me think they are just worried about pouring out puppies), no available pedigree or accurate outline of parentage (since the catahoula bulldog is a hybrid, it's important to be able to see exactly what percentage of either breed they are, and have verification of that, the breeder may be misrepresenting a dog if they are not open to share these things, and also the quality of the dog may be in question as well), personal and business interaction with other people and conduct towards other breeders, inconsistency in their actions or

statements, and any resistance to disclose things which may be of importance to a prospective buyer. The relationship between prospective owner and breeder needs to be a good one, there are many important things lost when they are not. The breeder should stand behind their dogs for life, if they don't, they shouldn't be breeding them. Sometimes it is hard to tell less-than-par breeders apart from good ones, but one thing is usually true: they talk a good game, but don't have much to back it up if you dig a little deeper or ask the wrong questions.

Some other things to be on the lookout for is people who "puppy-mill" their dogs. Again, many puppy-miller type breeders are very skilled at covering or showing their circumstances through rose colored windows. Common sense and taking time to research and talk to your prospective breeder is very important. Some signs you can look for that may be apparent would include a breeder having an abundance of litters per year, of either different or similar breeds. If the breeder does not ask you any questions about yourself or what life the dog will have this may indicate they are only worried about selling a puppy and the welfare of that dog they produced is not a concern of theirs, which is wrong. Of course the quality of the breeding stock dictates the quality of the offspring offered. If a dog has a fault and is bred, it's not a matter of if, but when will that fault show up again in their offspring. Sometimes it skips a generation or two, but it will reappear. Look carefully and research the breeding stock that is being used to produce your prospective puppy, as they will take many characteristics from their ancestors both physical and otherwise.

Also, notice I keep saying "dog" not "puppy," that is because you are purchasing a dog, they are only a puppy for a few months of their many years of life, keep that in mind. When purchasing or adopting a dog, whether it be for work, show, play, or companionship, that is a lifetime responsibility and should not be taken lightly.

How To Select What Bulldog To Breed

American bulldogs are the only bulldog that may be used to produce a catahoula bulldog. The quality of the catahoula bulldog is dependent greatly on the quality of American bulldog you choose to make the

hybrid cross with. There are many different types of American bulldogs around today. The original catahoula bulldog was used crossing "old southern white" American bulldogs, these dogs are "original country bulldogs that are not descended from any of the modern lines, i.e. breeds strains with no infusion of blood from the common American bulldog lines."⁴ It is believed that Scott, Johnson, and others used these dogs as the foundation of their famed dogs. There are still "old southern white" American bulldogs in abundance today, if you know where to look. This type has also been called "white English bulldogs" or "Alabama bulldogs."³ To many, this is the only type of bulldog that should be crossed with the catahoula bulldog to stay true to their heritage and intended characteristics.

This type fits into, or was the raw ingredients for, the "Scott" type of American bulldog. This type has also been called "standard/performance American bulldog." These are a taller more balanced appearing dog. They were originally bred as a farm utility dog, therefore some have a higher prey drive as was needed to keep away unwanted varmints and to catch wild animals. They are medium to large, athletic, free breathing dogs that are "very agile and structurally sound."⁴

Another type of American bulldog is the "Johnson" type. Other names for this type of American bulldog are "bully" or "classic" type. These types of American bulldogs are "larger, wider dogs with more bone, pendulous lips, facial wrinkles, and a shorter muzzle."⁴ In the beginning, these dogs had Olde English Bulldog influence to create the desired look.

Most commonly seen today are hybrid American bulldogs, crosses between the Johnson and Scott type. Other commonly seen types of American bulldogs today are not really American bulldogs at all. There are what's called "rocky mountain bulldogs" which are "Johnson type" bulldogs with heavy influence of mastiff, boxer, and English bulldogs to create an "overdone" or muscle bound, very flat faced individual. Another is called "American bullies" which are a fairly new breed that are bulldogs with heavy pit bull and Staffordshire terriers, among other breeds, and are not American bulldogs at all.

Any dogs bred to have an over exaggeration of certain characteristics are bound to run into health problems down the road, and should be

avoided at all costs. When a lesser quality bulldog is used to create a catahoula bulldog, a lesser quality catahoula bulldog is then the result.

There has been a decrease in quality catahoula bulldogs in the last few years as the breeds popularity has grown and breeders lower their standards in order to create a supply to meet the small rise in demand. Often times a more bully appearing catahoula bulldog is created in hopes of creating nothing more than a colorful bully dog, and the integrity of the catahoula bulldog is lost. Breeders need to be selective when choosing what bulldog to breed as to avoid a loss in athleticism, endurance, and drive; and also to avoid health issues such as poor hips and elbows, breathing trouble, and structural issues including bad bites.

How To Select What Catahoula To Breed

As with the bulldog, using a poor quality catahoula to produce a catahoula bulldog will be just as injurious to the final result. It has been said that the catahoula is what "makes" the catahoula bulldog. Their unique characteristics, personalities, physical and mental abilities, and yes, coloring, are what make the catahoula bulldog so wonderful. The first thing a breeder should remember is to not breed for color, this single handedly is and/or will be the demise of the catahoula bulldog. There are so many other characteristics that should be placed of importance over color. The temperament, conformation, and physical capabilities of the catahoula should be placed before color. If this is the case, a higher quality and more healthy dog is the result. Catahoulas also need to be screened for healthy hips and elbows, as well as proper hearing and eyesight. With the presence of the merle and piebald genes at play more so than with any other merle carrying breed, some knowledge of how these genes work is imperative to the success of choosing an adequate catahoula to breed. As an example, double merle or excessively white catahoulas, though appearing to be able to see or hear fine, run the risk of being unilaterally deaf (deaf in one ear) or have compromised eyesight including irregular pupils. None of these conditions are one you want to pass along to puppies or future generations.

Temperament needs to be a consideration when choosing a Catahoula to breed as well. An even temperament is important not only to working homes where the dogs must be able to get along with other dogs and people in order to perform their jobs, but in family homes and other areas as well. An overly aggressive or exceedingly shy dog should not be bred. However, when the drive, ambition, and heart is bred down in a Catahoula, that dog should not be bred either, because that is no longer a true Catahoula. Especially in working situations, Catahoulas who have been bred away from working dogs and bred more for unique color will produce a Catahoula Bulldog with less working drive and heart, plus more health issues, which is going away from the true intention of the hybrid breed.

Duty of The Breeder

"With great color comes great responsibility!" It is far too easy for a Catahoula Bulldog breeder to have as a goal creating a colorful Bulldog, navigating away from the true essence of the Catahoula Bulldog. It is one important duty of the breeder to ensure that their dogs are not bred specifically for color, but bred to create a healthy dog, sound of mind, body, and soul. Another goal of the Catahoula Bulldog breeder should not to breed for excessively bully-looking dogs, because this is also navigating away from the essence of the dogs. Excessively bully dogs often decrease the athleticism, heart, stamina, health and longevity of the Catahoula Bulldog. The Catahoula Bulldog breeder should have as their goal the betterment and preservation of these dogs at heart. They should always strive to better the dogs they are breeding, never breed to a lesser quality dog, always to one of equal or greater quality. Faults such as bad bites, crooked or bowed legs, sway backs, restricted breathing, deafness, irregular pupils, or other genetically transferred conditions should not be bred into any program. Breeders should also strive to preserve the true legacy and integrity of the Catahoula Bulldog, that of a working breed. The dogs are not meant to be bred into less active dogs that are able to fit into every American household. This would be of detriment to the breed, and would result in a legacy lost. With all the popularity and increased awareness of the breed, breeders need to keep a hold of what is important, and not fall into the bandwagon of creating more dogs to sell or market. If you want to produce a mild dog with no drive or

ambition, one that can be commercialized and changed so much that the true purpose is lost, Catahoula bulldogs are not the breed for you.

Breeders must take extra measures to insure their dogs are not going to end up in the wrong hands. Catahoula bulldogs' unique appearance find them in trouble many times, a person gets blinded by the "pretty doggy" and are ill prepared or unequipped for the actual dog that is dressed in the pretty coat. Breeders must carefully select people for the dogs they produce, and ensure people know and understand the dogs for what they are before taking one home. Honesty and integrity of the breeder is of utmost importance, without this nothing else matters. When a breeder misrepresents a dog or is dishonest of the origin/breed/type/characteristics/faults/etc they are not only hurting their dog, the client, but are also hurting themselves.

Misrepresentation and fraudulent or dishonest activity is abundant in the dog breeding world, as the old saying goes "buyer beware." Being open, honest, outright and consistent with prospective buyers and fellow breeders and dog enthusiasts will get you much more in life, because bad activity will always come out in the open eventually, it is only a matter of time.

Duty of the Working Dog Owner

As a traditionally working breed, it is the duty of the working dog owner to preserve the true abilities and characteristics of the dogs and to use them for their intended purpose. It is here where breeding stock should be determined, not by looks alone. Many working breeds were compromised when they became main stream, and it is my worst nightmare that this will happen to the Catahoula bulldog as well. Some of the working breeds who's true intention has been lost to the general public are German shepards, Shetland sheepdogs, standard collies, and poodles just to name a few. As a working dog owner, use of the dogs, along with critical analysis, is important in the form of feedback to the breeders of the dogs which exhibit the best qualities or abilities. It is also important for the working dog owner to be helpful and understanding of a non-working owner. It is up to the working owners to provide valuable knowledge and insight to the behaviors and characteristics of these working animals to help better equip non-working homes to provide the best possible life for their active

companion.

Duty of the Pet Owner

The pet owner of a working dog, or those who do not use the dog for the traditional purpose for which they were originally produced, have a large amount of responsibility on their shoulders. First, they must know and understand the dogs for what they were meant to be. They must embrace the characteristics that some average dog owners do not understand or that they may see as undesirable, such as heightened prey drive, over active tendencies, stubbornness, etc. Though many times dogs that end up in pet homes have less strong traits that make them a working dogs, many times they still have all these traits full strength. A duty of the pet owner of one of these dogs is not to request that the dogs are changed to fit their, non working lifestyles, but rather they themselves need to change, or change their breed of dog they own.

Non working homes are crucial to the breed, as they provide an outlet for excess dogs to go, and many are very wonderful and loving homes. But getting a dog based off appearance and not fully understanding them, then making the dog pay for it in the form of re-homing it, placing it in a shelter, discarding it, or mistreating it is not right and should be avoided at all costs. As a non-working home acquiring a working breed, it is up to you to seek out knowledgeable people to help you understand and train your companion. You chose a working breed, therefore you must mold to the tendencies of the dog, not the other way around.

Another duty of the pet AND working dog owner – anyone buying a dog from an outside source or breeder – is to curb or control the quality of dog being produced. If you buy a mediocre dog from someone, register that dog with one of the puppy-mill supporting designer breeding, less than credible registry, then you are only encouraging more of those types of dogs to be produced! If you do your homework, buy from a reputable and high quality breeder, register with a legitimate registry with solid principles, then you are not only getting a better result, but you are doing your part to promote that type of dog, not the other.

We have a great responsibility and duty as owners, breeders,

advocates of a specific breed of dog, no matter the breed. The true purpose of that breed should never be overlooked, or bred out. In this world, real steadfast qualities such as honesty and devotion to doing what is right are sadly being seen less every day. We ourselves must live up to the standard we put our dogs to.