



FACT: Pit bulls are incredible dogs!

Don't
believe the
myths you
may hear!



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blamed for bad deeds
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Pit Bulls: All-American Dogs

How public perception
changed pit bulls from
heroes to villains

BY ANNE STOKES

Dawn Capp, founder and president of Chako Pit Bull Rescue with her 3-year-old rescue American Pit Bull Terrier, Soli.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



Dawn Capp grew up around pit bulls. In 1995, when she went to a Texas animal shelter to adopt one of her own, she was told they didn't adopt out "vicious dogs," they euthanize them — even the puppies. Shelter workers couldn't understand why she wanted a pit bull, insisting "only drug dealers wanted them." Capp disagreed.

So she founded a rescue group called Chako Pit Bull Rescue — named after her childhood pit bull companion — to help find homes for pit bulls in need, and to offer training classes and workshops specific to pit bulls and their owners. Today, she remains a passionate advocate for a widely misunderstood breed.

"Most pit bulls love people and are remarkably gentle with children. As with any dog, it is important to spend time looking for the right *individual* dog," Capp says. "A dog paired with the right person results in the greatest of friendships."

Breed history

Pit bulls emerged in the 1700s in the U.K. as a cross between bull and terrier breeds. Pit bull breed standards emerged in the United States by the late 1800s resulting in several full and related pedigree breeds recognized today by the American Kennel Club and United Kennel Club.

Throughout World War II, pit bulls were highly sought after all-purpose working dogs and family companions. They were symbols of blue-collar Americana: loyal, smart and hard-working. Sergeant Stubby, a decorated World War I American hero, was a pit bull. Petey, from "The Little Rascals," was one of the first registered American Pit Bull Terriers. Famous and influential Americans like Teddy Roosevelt and Helen Keller owned pit bulls.

A social shift

The Animal Welfare Act of 1976 criminalized dog fighting in all 50 states. Despite the law's good intentions, resulting media coverage blamed the viciousness of dog fighting on its victims: pit bulls. Ironically, this attention made pit bulls even more attractive to, and led to an increase in, irresponsible owners and backyard breeders.

"That media attention fueled it. It was good that it shone a light on dog fighting, but it also came at the expense of making the breed more 'popular' than it was," Capp says. "Public perception started to change."

**"A
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DAWN CAPP

Founder and president of
Chako Pit Bull Rescue

Discrimination

Today, the high number of pit bull-type dogs in shelters is a result of decades of discrimination and media misinformation. Breed-specific legislation (BSL) ordinances enacted across the country are ineffective at reducing dog attack statistics and result in high euthanasia rates. Owners face discrimination in housing, insurance coverage, boarding facilities and airlines — even with service dogs.

Instead, Capp says it makes more sense to hold owners more accountable for their dogs' *actions* instead of their appearance, freeing dogs from stigmas attached to the pit bull label and the potential that they may be euthanized simply because of their breed.

"We need stiffer penalties for the people who are negligent," she says. "That should be across the board for *every* owner of *every* breed."



Pit bulls by the numbers



Dogs labeled as pit bulls are **the most common breed** found in shelters. ⁽¹⁾



40% of pit bulls in shelters

are put down, making them the most commonly euthanized breed. Only **9%** of Labrador Retrievers, the second-most euthanized breed, are euthanized. ⁽²⁾



87.9% of pit bull-type dogs pass temperament tests assessing aggression and friendliness. ⁽³⁾
Golden Retrievers: **85.6%**
German Shepherds: **85.3%**



Breed-specific legislation — the kinds that target pit bulls — have been ineffective at reducing the number of dog attack-related hospitalizations. Such legislation is opposed by:

- The Humane Society of the United States
- American Bar Association
- American Kennel Club
- American Veterinary Medical Association
- American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Animal Control Association
- U.S. Department of Justice



\$2,595,021 is the estimated annual cost of implementing a BSL in Sacramento County. ⁽⁴⁾

¹ American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ² American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ³ The American Temperament Test Society, 2017 ⁴ Best Friends Animal Society

What Does a Pit Bull *look like?*

Even experts don't always get it right



BY ANNE STOKES

Unlike most dog breeds, dogs who are labeled as pit bulls don't have a distinctive physical quality like a Dalmatian's spots, a Great Dane's size or a pug's flat face. Because pit bulls share common traits with a lot of breeds, many dogs are often misidentified as pit bulls or pit mixes.

Characteristics can include:

- Medium to large size
- Smooth, short coat of any color or pattern (except merle)
- Broad, "blocky" head shape with a medium to short snout
- Muscular neck and shoulders with a deep, broad chest
- Ears can be held high, dropped or any degree in between
- Medium-sized tail, typically straight

"Pit bull" criteria tends to be subjective and varies per shelter or municipality. Pit bulls can be especially difficult to identify in mixed-breed dogs.

"Pit bull" is not a distinctive breed because of its diversity," says Dawn Capp, founder of Chako Pit Bull Rescue. "I can see a pit bull and say, 'I think that's a purebred Pit Bull,' but even I sometimes say, 'I don't really know' — and I've grown up around them and I've shown them in all three registries."

According to a 2015 study by the National Canine Research Council, visual identification of pit bull breeds is inconsistent and unreliable, even for shelter staff, whose expertise is relied upon to

identify dog breeds and determine breed-specific legislation (BSL) disputes.

"When you say 'pit bulls' you're really talking about dogs that look like a pit bull, but may be any kind of dog," Capp says. "They'll say, 'I don't know, but it looks like it has a blocky head, it could be a pit bull,' so they call it a pit bull mix."

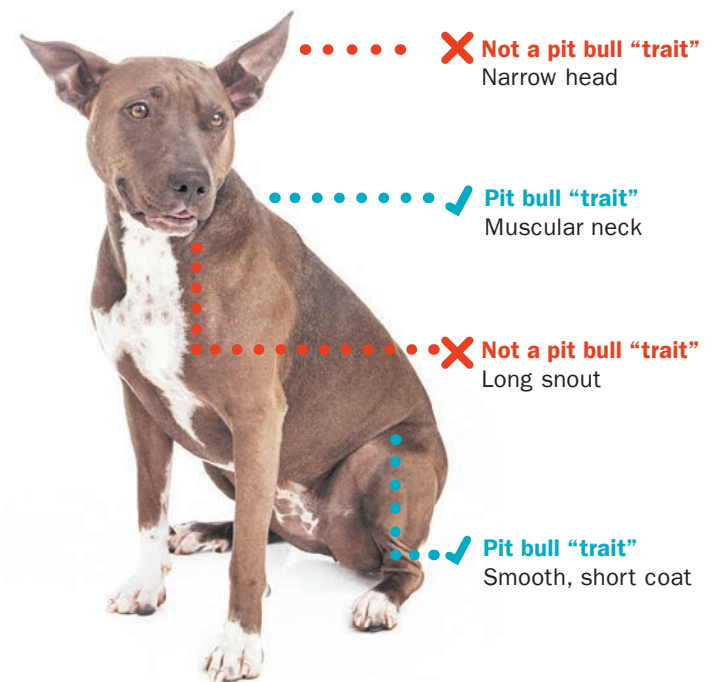
That sort of misidentification can mean trouble for dogs, especially in cities and counties with a BSL. For instance:

- **Denver, Colo.:** Over 4,000 dogs have been killed since 1989. Yet from 1995 to 2010, Denver County had the highest rates of dog bite-related hospitalizations in the state.
- **Cincinnati, Ohio:** Since 2003, the city has spent \$500,000 enforcing its pit bull ban and euthanized nearly 400 dogs. However, between 2005 and 2008, 34 different dog breeds were cited as responsible for 1,000 bite incidents.
- **Miami-Dade County, Fla.:** Between 2005 and 2009, animal control put 4,000 pit bulls in shelters, euthanizing 2,019 of them. Officers identify pit bulls using a checklist of physical characteristics to determine if a dog is at least 51 percent "pit bull."

What a dog looks like — not its temperament, behavior or history — can be a matter of life and death.

A pit bull or not a pit bull?

Identifying pit bulls on visuals alone is unreliable. Dogs such as the one below would be classified as a "pit bull" even if they actually weren't, just because they share some characteristics commonly given to pit bulls. That's why the best way to identify a pit bull isn't through visual identification, but by using a DNA test such as the WISDOM PANEL. See which features of the below dog would and would not be called "pit bull traits" even though they are all shared by many breeds.



Sensationalizing a breed

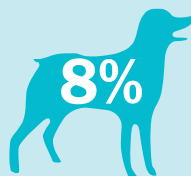


Pit bull attack headlines garner attention, but what's reported isn't always representative of the big picture, especially when it comes to pit bulls. A research study conducted by producer and director Isabelle Sherrill for her documentary "Beyond the Myth: A Film About Pit Bulls and Breed Discrimination" found that:

68%

of articles reporting pit bull attacks mention breed in the headline

vs.



of articles reporting attacks by other dog types mention breed

In 2010, a phone survey of 250 people conducted by the Independent Data Collection Center found:

92% of people believe pit bulls are negatively portrayed by the media

60% of people with negative views of pit bulls say media coverage contributes to their opinions

You Can't Judge a Good Dog by Its Breed

Breed is only tendency, not a promise! 🐾

BY ANNE STOKES

When Lori Lee saw Niki on Chako Pit Bull Rescue's website, she thought they might be a good match for each other. The 6-month old pit bull puppy had bowed legs — a condition known as “knuckling over” — which happens when muscles, ligaments, tendons and bones grow unevenly.

“This was a pup that I knew going in would not be a dog to take on hikes and runs, which was great for the lifestyle I have,” Lee says. “I have orthopedic issues — I’ve had a knee replacement, I’ve had surgeries on my ankles and feet — so I’m not going to go hiking all day.”

Fortunately, Niki's condition was cured with adjustable braces — courtesy of Chako — that realigned his growing legs. But without Lee, Niki might not have found a home at all as a

special needs pit bull.

“He had been dumped at the shelter and would surely have been euthanized had Chako not stepped in,” she says. “Seeing how far he had already come, I was drawn to him.”

With 30 years of law enforcement experience, Lee knows better than to judge on face value alone. She knows just how much potential matters. As a pit bull owner, she's keenly aware that dogs face a similar stigma.

“When we set them aside for appearance's sake or the label that's placed on a dog, we've completely discarded the heart and the spirit and the soul of that animal,” she says.

Experts agree with Lee. According to studies from the National Canine Research Council and the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, *owner-related* factors influence dog bite statistics more than breed.

“Breed is only tendency. That does not mean that any individual dog is going to exhibit

those traits,” says Dawn Capp, founder of Chako Pit Bull Rescue. “You want your dog to be a good match for you as a person, your lifestyle, your personality, what you're able to deal with.”

Since then, Lee has welcomed several other special needs dogs into her home. They have an amazing big brother in Niki, now 5 years old and perfectly healthy.

“He will get down on the ground — he's a big 70 pound pup now — and lay on his back and let these other pups who might not be able to walk very well, come up to him. His play is catered to the special needs of individual puppies,” Lee says. “It almost makes us wonder if he remembers what it's like to have special needs.”

“When we
set them aside
... we've completely
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LORI LEE
Pit bull owner

Niki is far from “vicious,” a stereotype often given to pit bulls. In fact, his owner Lori says he takes care of her other dogs, like she took care of him when his legs were bowed as a puppy (left).
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS



Niki as a puppy with bowed legs, before receiving braces.
PHOTO COURTESY OF
CHAKO PIT BULL RESCUE

Are you ready for a dog?



Before adopting a dog, any prospective owner should make sure they're welcoming a dog into their home for the right reasons — not based on breed or looks.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself before you adopt:

1 What kind of dog do I want?

Think about what kind of personality your ideal dog would have, whether you're looking for a marathon partner or fellow TV binge-watcher.

2 How big is my living space?

Take into account the size of your home, and if an energetic dog would have a yard or frequent access to the park.

3 What is my lifestyle like?

Make sure your new dog's personality and energy level will fit with the needs of your work and social life.

4 Who else lives in my house?

If you have children or other pets, make sure your new dog is already used to these types of housemates.

5 How can I cover future costs?

Make sure your finances allow for veterinary care, training and rent deposits to ensure your new dog has excellent care throughout their entire life.

A Bond That Doesn't Break

Why behavior guidance training is necessary for each dog and owner

BY RODNEY OROSCO

Picking out the right pooch is only one part of welcoming a new pit bull or other dog into your family — the next part is making sure dog and owner have the skills to navigate their new life together.

“Dogs are not born with the skills to live in the human world,” says Nicole Cacy, animal behavior manager at the Sacramento SPCA. “Scavenging for food, and chewing and urinating on soft surfaces are all normal dog behavior — it is our job to teach dogs how to successfully live in our world.”

Proper training is necessary to help dogs learn the skills that will help them be well-behaved pets.

In the Sacramento region, shelters, rescues and other organizations like Chako Pit Bull Rescue, Sacramento SPCA, Midtown Mutts and Scooter's Pals all offer behavior guidance training or can connect owners to a program that is

right for them. Every owner should at least sign up for basic manners training with their new dog.

“Training classes using positive reinforcement-based methods are a great bonding experience and help set the foundation for human/canine communication,” Cacy says.

For example, the Sacramento SPCA offers a range of classes using such positive reinforcement methods that are all taught by respected and credentialed trainers and dog behavior specialists.

By enrolling in a behavior guidance class at your local shelter or rescue (look for the  icon on page 8 to see where you can take a class!), you can strengthen the bond with your new dog and ensure they are a good fit for your home by tackling common skills.

Behavior training can help:

Staying



Leash walking



Social interaction



Correct leash pulling



Overcome anxiety



Stop food guarding



Why should you spay/neuter your pet?

If you are not planning on breeding your dog — make sure to get your pet spayed or neutered. Here is why:

- 1 To keep your pup healthy**
Spaying/neutering significantly reduces the chance of your dog contracting a deadly bacterial infection and certain cancers.
- 2 To keep your dog happier**
Spaying/neutering decreases your dog's desire to escape and wander the neighborhood looking for mates. It also can reduce altercations with other dogs.
- 3 To promote good behavior**
Spaying a dog keeps her from going into heat every few weeks which causes a lot of discomfort, yowling and frequent urination. Neutering can also eliminate marking behaviors.
- 4 To reduce the number of dogs in shelters**
Pit bulls have the highest number of dogs entering shelters. As pit bulls are prone to having litters as large as 10 puppies, reducing the number of dogs who need homes is another way of keeping them out of shelters. Some shelters or rescues, like the Sacramento SPCA, may offer free spay and neuter services specific to pit bulls and pit bull mixes to try and keep those numbers lower.



Incredible Pets' top items for training



Vital Essentials
Training is more effective with treats!



Easy Walk Harness
Gently discourage pulling and redirect attention.



Spot Mega Twister Rope Toy
Tie to a secure object and let your dog get all that pulling out of their system!

The Search Ends Here

PHOTOS COURTESY
OF THE SACRAMENTO
SPCA AND PLACER
COUNTY ANIMAL
SERVICES

Visit a shelter or rescue to find the right dog for you

BY RODNEY OROSCO 

So you've decided to become a dog person and bring home a four-legged best friend. But where do you start? If you want a dog who will always be excited to see you, but has already been well cared for and has all their shots, go to your local animal shelter.

Getting a dog from the shelter means getting a forever friend who is both happy and healthy.

"Shelter dogs have had wellness checks, been spayed/neutered, been microchipped, been treated for fleas and they have been de-wormed," explains Katie Ingram, Placer County Animal Services manager.

Most backyard breeders offer none of these services, not even vaccinations. Dogs from irresponsible breeders like these can also be more expensive and contribute to high numbers of shelter dogs.

"By adopting a dog from the shelter," Ingram says, "you are giving a second chance to an abandoned or unwanted dog."

It is an unfortunate fact that too many dogs, of all breeds

and all ages, are often abandoned for reasons specific to their owners and end up in a shelter. However, dogs from shelters are still great companions and have a lot to offer new owners.

**"Knowing
that we had a
hand in helping a
dog find a forever
home is truly
rewarding."**

KATIE INGRAM
Placer County Animal
Services Manager

"Older dogs are often housebroken and already have some training,"

Ingram says, "this makes their transition into a new home much easier."

While dogs are housed at a shelter, life is focused on getting them ready for their next home. They are kept in constant contact with shelter staff who determine the dog's temperament and help socialize the dogs with more humans.

"If a previous owner is known, we collect all the information from that owner on how the dog behaved in their home," Ingram says.

This helps inform shelter staff on the best fit for the dog's next home.



Many shelter dogs also receive regular training while at the shelter, allowing them to go to their new home with leash skills and the ability to stay when asked, Ingram says.

Dogs who are a bit "willful" may also attend a special shelter behavior program to better modify their behavior. "This program has been incredibly successful in helping dogs find the perfect home," Ingram says.

Because they are so well cared for, healthy and started in training, a shelter dog is often much better than a private breeder. Dogs received from shelters are also more likely to stay in their new homes.

"One of the most meaningful parts of our jobs at the shelter is to connect a shelter dog with their perfect home," Ingram says. "Knowing that we had a hand in helping a dog find a forever home is truly rewarding."

Why do dogs end up in shelters?

It is not because they are inherently mean or a "bad" dog, a dog may end up in a shelter for many reasons — reasons due to no fault of their own.

"The dogs in a shelter don't need training, it is the human that put them there that needs the training," explains Susan Wallace, founder of Scooter's Pals Dog Rescue in Grass Valley.

Here are some reasons why pit bulls and other breeds may find themselves in a shelter:

Change in housing

Moving to a smaller living space or a place that does not accept pets (or a specific breed) will often result in a great dog being surrendered to the shelter. Another huge reason why a dog may find its way to a shelter is because its breed was "blacklisted" by insurance companies and landlords. Some attorneys, like Sacramento's Dawn Capp, have been pushing for changes in the law to keep these dogs in their homes.

Cost

A change in job status can mean a pet no longer fits into an owner's budget. An unexpected expense, such as a medical bill, could also mean a family dog ends up in the shelter to pay the bills.

An "oops" litter

A dog who has not been spayed/neutered can mean a house full of puppies. Though cute, taking on the care for that many dogs is unfeasible for most households.

Lack of training

Dogs need leaders who can communicate with them. But if an owner doesn't pursue behavior guidance training, they may think their pup is impossible when the pup really just needs some direction.

Lifestyle change

A new baby, an allergic reaction or a new significant other can lead to a dog becoming a shelter resident if their family can't find them a new home on their own.



Discrimination Costs Owners

Q&A with an insurance broker who
believes in the breed

BY RODNEY OROSCO

Misconceptions about the temperament and “nature” of pit bulls do more than tarnish the reputation of the breed — it can keep their owners from getting quality housing and insurance.

Deborah J. Turner does not buy into these myths. In fact, she is challenging them. The President of Dean Insurance Agency, Inc., Turner explains why she is selling insurance to pit bull owners across the nation and why others are not, (but should).

Q: How do stereotypes prevent pit bull owners from getting insurance?

DT: There are many myths surrounding pit bull-type dogs — like they are all “vicious.” Too many people believe this. When an incident takes place there are high emotions and any dog with a square dog face is called a “pit bull.” These stereotypes add to the belief that pit bulls are “bad dogs.” And, this leads to insurers not wanting to issue policies to pit bull owners. It is a vicious cycle.

Q: How are breed blacklists used against owners?

DT: Breed blacklists are an arbitrary list of dog breeds that each insurance company uses to determine whether or not to even present a dog owner with a quote if they own a dog from a breed on that list. Many companies will not insure a home if a pit bull is on their blacklist. I find it interesting that the lists do not always have the same dogs on them.

Q: How do insurance companies determine a dog’s breed?

DT: If there is a question as to breed, a photo is sent to the insurance company where the underwriter decides if they should issue a policy based on the dog’s looks in the photo. There is a study out of the University of Florida

“Stereotypes
add to the belief
that pit bulls are
‘bad dogs’ ... It is a
vicious cycle.”

DEBORAH J. TURNER
President of Dean Insurance
Agency, Inc.



where they sent out thousands of pictures to groomers, shelter workers, breeders and veterinarians. There were 100 mixed breeds and the group, as a whole, was only able to identify 27 percent of the breeds correctly. It is wrong that professionals are misidentifying breeds and it is equally wrong they are discriminating against pit bulls.

Q: How do other insurance companies view policies that cover pit bulls?

DT: Our policy began as a research project until it was mentioned that people really needed this as a policy. Eighteen months later I launched the first version. The policy covers dog bites and a variety of other dog-related accidents. The insured is protected on and off of their residence, anywhere in the USA, and there is no deductible. I asked the insurance companies why they don’t have these policies and they think I am just wrong to have it. Policy holders think it’s a wonderful thing.



Don’t believe the myths

✗ Pit bulls are NOT more aggressive than other dogs

Personalities are not inherent to any breed of dog, aggressive tendencies included! Some breeds are predisposed to being more “territorial” than others — so at most, just be cautious when bringing your dog around other dogs if they are stingy about their space!

✗ Pit bull jaws DO NOT “lock”

This popular myth is actually untrue for *all* dogs. Numerous scientists, animal experts and universities have all publicly stated that there is no dog that can lock their top and bottom jaws together — pit bulls included!

✗ Banning pit bulls DOES NOT make people “safer”

Breed-specific legislation (BSL) is used across the nation to target pit bulls and “protect the public.” However, areas with a BSL often do not see a decrease in dog attacks or bites. That’s why the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) advocates for *individual* dog evaluations over BSLs.



Your Perfect Dog is Waiting

Pit bulls are amazing dogs. No matter if you're looking for a marathon partner, fellow couch potato, mischievous trickster or loving family dog, there's a pit bull out there for you.

Shelters and rescues are the best places to adopt from because they know how to find the best fit for you and your lifestyle, and make sure that your new friend is happy and healthy before you take them home.

Use the key below to contact your local shelter or rescue about adoption, fostering, training programs, volunteer opportunities or donations.

Key

- | | | | |
|---------|--------|-------|--------------|
| Adopt | Foster | Shop | Vet Services |
| Daycare | Insure | Train | Volunteer |

Brought to you by:

Chako Pit Bull Rescue



P.O. Box 348643
Sacramento, CA 95834
Main: 916-534-8608
Adoptions: adoptions@chako.org
www.meetup.com/pitbulls
www.chako.org



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www.midtownmutts.com



Grateful Dog Daycare



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Sacramento, CA 95811
Main: 916-446-2501
www.gratefuldogdaycare.com



Placer County Animal Services



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Main: 530-886-5540
www.placer.ca.gov/animal



Sacramento SPCA



6201 Florin Perkins Road
Sacramento, CA 95828
Main: 916-383-7387
www.sspca.org



The Local Bark



3201 Fitzgerald Road
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www.localbark.com



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