

THE PIT BULL DILEMMA



Welcome to the "Pit Bull Dilemma seminar".

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Many of the photos in this presentation showcase Buster Foundation foster dogs that are in need of forever homes. Please visit www.BusterDogs.com and consider adopting a rescued pit bull.

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JOANIE WAZNEY

The Buster Foundation
Pit Bull Education and Rescue
www.BusterDogs.com



My name is Joanie Wazney. I am the Vice-President/Director of Operations of The Buster Foundation Pit Bull Education and Rescue. I have been rescuing pit bulls for over 15 years and co-founded The Buster Foundation back in 2002. I also have 15 years experience in the veterinary medical field.

www.BusterDogs.com

2

DIANA MCKAY

WonderBull Pit Bull Education
www.WonderBull.com



My name is Diana McKay. I am the owner of WonderBull.com a Pit Bull Education blog. I have been educating the public, rescues, and shelters about Pit Bulls for the last nine years. My previous experience includes seven years volunteering with local all-breed dog rescues. I attend several pet-related events in Michigan throughout the year, giving out free educational materials on responsible pit bull ownership, dog safety, and advocating for breed-neutral dangerous dog laws.

www.WonderBull.com/blog

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WHAT WE'LL COVER

Rescuing	Breed advocacy and responsibility
Fostering and kennel enrichment	Breed specific legislation
Placement	Q&A

4

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Today, we'll be covering best practices for rescuing, fostering, and placing pit bulls into appropriate homes. Breed advocacy and responsibility. We'll also discuss Breed Specific Legislation. If you have questions, we ask that you please wait until the end to ask them during our Q&A portion.

ROUND TABLES

3:30 pm

Pit Bull Rescue
(Joanie Wazney)

3:30 pm

Breed Specific Legislation
(Diana McKay)

5

5

We will also be hosting two round table discussions later on this afternoon at 3:30, one focusing on Pit Bull Rescue, and one focusing on BSL (Breed Specific Legislation). Let's get started....

"PIT BULL"

- American Pit Bull Terrier
- American Staffordshire Terrier
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier (pictured)



6

6

For the purposes of today's session, when we use the term "Pit Bull" we are using it to refer to three breeds: The American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT), American Staffordshire Terrier (AST or AmStaff), and Staffordshire Bull Terrier (SBT, Staffie or Staffy Bull), the smaller English cousin of the APBT and the AmStaff.



QUICK POLL

7

Let's take a quick poll here:
Who is currently volunteering with a rescue that places pit bulls?
Who is currently volunteering with a rescue that does NOT place pit bulls?
Who is currently working or volunteering in a shelter that places pit bulls?
Who is currently working or volunteering in a shelter that does NOT place pit bulls?
Any animal control or police officers here today?

7



Ugh! Wake me when the news is over.

8

While we all may not agree on everything, It would be safe to say that each one of us CAN agree on ONE thing: The breed's reputation is in our hands, now more than ever. We must make the right choices when rescuing and placing pit bulls; no matter how difficult those choices are. The future of these noble dogs depends on us.

8

RESCUING

Common sense rules

9

The grim reality is that there is a disproportionate number of pit bulls compared to other breeds in shelters throughout the country. Ideally we'd love to see every animal rehabilitated and re-homed. But the reality is that the supply far outweighs the demand for pit bulls.

9

KNOW YOUR LIMITS



10

It's important to know what your limits are, but even more important to stick to them. Always keep the best interest of the animals in mind. Overextending yourself can have adverse affects on all the dogs in your care. It's better to have less and do it right. If you have the resources to take care of 4 dogs, then stick to only 4 dogs at a time. Headache, heartache and tragedy are inevitable if you take on more dogs than you have the space or resources for. The dogs will ALWAYS end up paying the price.

10

TEMPERAMENT



11

As we mentioned earlier, the breed's reputation is in your hands. For the last several years, Michigan has been a hotbed of activity for BSL proposals by legislators. Blame it on the media, blame it on irresponsible owners, blame it on backyard breeders. There's plenty of blame to go around. Every single negative incident involving a pit bull adds fuel to the fire. As advocates for these dogs, we cannot afford to be a part of the problem. Which is why every single dog that you put out there must be the BEST breed ambassador possible.

11

PIT BULL RESCUE CENTRAL QUOTE

"Dogs that demonstrate aggression towards humans, or significant aggression towards other animals should not be placed for adoption. Dogs with known bite histories should not be placed for adoption..."

An American Pit Bull Terrier of correct temperament should be very people oriented, friendly even with strangers, and very tolerant of physical handling."

-- Pit Bull Rescue Central (<http://www.pbrc.net/recommendations.html>)

12

"Dogs that demonstrate aggression towards humans, or significant aggression towards other animals should not be placed for adoption. Dogs with known bite histories should not be placed for adoption... An American Pit Bull Terrier of correct temperament should be very people oriented, friendly even with strangers, and very tolerant of physical handling."

Pit Bull Rescue Central - Recommendations for Shelters and Rescues
www.pbrc.net/recommendations.html

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DOG-DOG AGGRESSION LEVELS



13

Dog aggression is common in pit bulls, especially between dogs of the same sex. Aggression towards other dogs is NOT a breed-specific trait, any breed can exhibit a lack of tolerance for other dogs. Remember, pit bulls are terriers. Many terrier breeds have dog aggression issues.

13

AKC QUOTE

“Terriers typically have little tolerance for other animals, including other dogs. Their ancestors were bred to hunt and kill vermin. Many continue to project the attitude that they’re always eager for a spirited argument.”

-- American Kennel Club (http://www.akc.org/breeds/terrier_group.cfm)

14

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www.akc.org/breeds/terrier_group.cfm

14



15

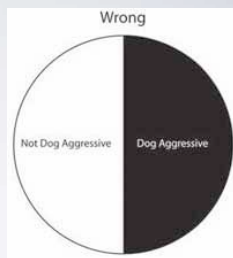
Intolerance toward other dogs may develop as a pit bull matures, typically between 10 months and 3 yrs. of age. Just because a puppy is good with other dogs does not guarantee that will always be the case as the pup matures. On the other side of that coin, some adult pit bulls that already exhibit intolerance towards other dogs may become more tolerant as they grow older.

Each dog is an individual, and should be treated as such. Not all pit bulls become aggressive toward other dogs.

15

DOG AGGRESSION

Source: www.pbrc.net



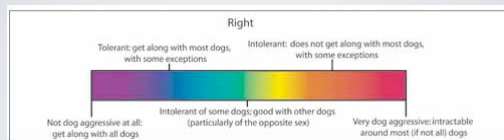
16

“Dog aggression (that is, aggression shown by dogs towards other dogs) is a complicated matter. Like most things in life, it is not a black-and-white issue. We should not think of dog aggression as a binary (dog aggressive/not dog aggressive) but as a spectrum:”

Source: Pit Bull Rescue Central
www.pbrc.net/breedinfo.html

16

DOG AGGRESSION



Source: www.pbrc.net

17

“dogs can exhibit zero dog aggression, dog aggression only in some situations, a high level of dog aggression, or dog aggression that falls somewhere in between these points. The graphic helps provides a helpful visualization of this concept:”

Source: Pit Bull Rescue Central
www.pbrc.net/breedinfo.html

17

TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH



18

Shelters and foster homes must take a proactive approach in preventing dog fights. Prevention, training and monitoring is the key to keeping the peace between multiple dogs. Avoid problems by closely monitoring playtime, how your dogs interact with each other around treats, bones, or when playing with toys. Training is essential for any breed of dog. It can help you diminish and manage any negative reactions towards other dogs that may arise in the future.

18

DOG AGGRESSION

HUMAN AGGRESSION

19

Just to clarify, dog aggression is completely different from human aggression. These are two completely separate temperament issues, and are not related. Thanks to the media, the term “aggression” is used as a blanket statement no matter what the circumstances. Many people incorrectly assume that a dog that shows aggression towards other dogs will automatically show aggression towards humans. This is simply not true.

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CORRECT TEMPERAMENT



20

As we mentioned earlier: “An American Pit Bull Terrier of correct temperament should be very people oriented, friendly even with strangers, and very tolerant of physical handling.” A pit bull that displays aggression towards people is NOT a good representative of the breed and should not be placed up for adoption. Indiscriminate breeding, in-breeding, abuse; any one of these can be a contributing factor to a dog showing aggression towards people.

20

PBRC QUOTE

*“Dog aggression is a normal trait for this breed...
human aggression is NOT!”*

-- Pit Bull Rescue Central (<http://www.pbrc.net/submission.html>)

21

“Dog aggression is a normal trait for this breed... human aggression is NOT!”

Pit Bull Rescue Central
www.pbrc.net/submission.html

Biters should never be placed up for adoption. This should be common sense. All rescues and shelters need to have the best interest of the animals in mind, not just have their hearts set on keeping every dog alive no matter what the circumstances are. By placing a biter, you put the lives of ALL pit bulls in jeopardy, everywhere. This bears repeating, every single negative incident involving a pit bull adds fuel to the fire for BSL.

21



Placing a human-aggressive pit bull is irresponsible, period. We have a legal and moral obligation to the breed, and the public. Don't put a dog out there that can do further damage to the breed's reputation. Don't risk everyone's right to own these noble dogs. Don't give pit bull haters more rope to hang us with, the breed can't afford it. Important note: You cannot get a true feeling of an animal's personality and temperament if they aren't feeling well. If they are too laid back or aggressive, it could be due to underlying health problems.

22



Babesia Canis (large-celled) and Babesia Gibsoni, a smaller-celled species is an infection that used to be rare but is becoming more common. Greyhounds and Pit Bull Terriers seem to be more susceptible to Babesia, but more recent studies indicate that it is crossing over to other breeds.

www.marvistavet.com/html/babesia_infection_in_dogs.html

This is not a well known infection, but we are starting to see more and more cases of it here in Michigan. It is important for you to know about Babesia, especially if you take in strays, particularly dogs that come from areas with a large population of stray dogs (e.g., Detroit). This infection is not common knowledge in the veterinary community.

23



Babesia is a blood parasite transmitted to a dog by ticks or bites from an already-infected dog. It can also be passed in utero from pregnant mothers to their pups. Babesia affects the immune system and causes the destruction of red blood cells. The symptoms mimic a lot of other diseases. Symptoms include: anemia, vomiting, lethargy, and diarrhea. This disease is most likely to be found in strays with evidence of bite wounds or tick infestation. It is also seen in racing Greyhounds, this is possibly due to the tick population down South, where Greyhound racing is prevalent.

(Photo: Bite wounds on Capone, a Detroit stray, when he was first taken in to the Buster Foundation adoption program)

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BEST FRIENDS QUOTE

"Although research isn't conclusive it is believed that there isn't really a cure for Babesia in this country and once an animal is infected they will carry the infection all of their life. Fortunately, Denzel responded to his medication and is now symptom free."

-- BestFriends.org (<http://www.bestfriends.org/dogtowndev/index.cfm?csid=3731&csj=3904&csit=Set&csip=2759>)

25

Diagnosis can be determined by a PCR test. Not all dogs that test positive for Babesia will show symptoms, but they can still infect other dogs. According to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary 1/2 of the Vick dogs that came to the sanctuary tested positive, but only one came down with symptoms.

"Although research isn't conclusive it is believed that there isn't really a cure for Babesia in this country and once an animal is infected they will carry the infection all of their life. Fortunately, Denzel responded to his medication and is now symptom free."

BestFriends.org

<http://www.bestfriends.org/GoogleSearch.aspx?txt=babesia>

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BABESIA CASE: CAPONE



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Capone, a Buster Foundation foster dog, was diagnosed with Babesia shortly after he was taken into foster care. Treatment protocol: Multiple antibiotics, IV fluids, blood transfusions (when their platelets get too low), lifetime of having to be extra cautious, potential of organ failure after the damage is done. Babesia is more prevalent in the dog population than anybody suspects. Dogs with unknown histories taken into rescues, especially the pit bulls.

Capone was approximately 1-2 years old when he was rescued. He lived to only 5 years of age. Capone died due to a combination of cancer, renal failure, and an active Babesia Gibsoni infection which compromised his immune system.

26

TICK AND BLOOD-BORNE



27

The epidemiology of it is changing. Not just tick-borne, but blood-borne. Study in NC, prevalence in pit bulls was 6.8% in the lowest infectious rate in a kennel, 25% in the highest kennel in the study. Lack of ticks in the kennel situations. Positive cases in dog without history of a tick bite. (Veterinary Forum Magazine Oct 2007, Marie Rosenthal, MS, executive editor. Doctor Adam Birkenheuer. Doctor Dougie MacIntire). Problems for rescues and shelters: Expense for diagnostics. Most shelters and rescues can't afford to test every pit bull that comes in to their care. In general, many are not able to run any kind of blood work unless there are symptoms to warrant it.

(Photo: Capone, a Detroit stray, when he was first taken in to the Buster Foundation adoption program)

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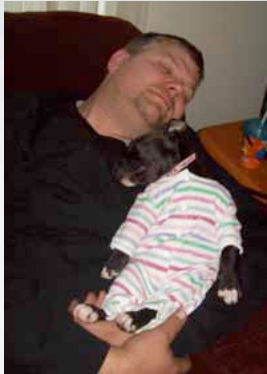
FOSTERING AND KENNEL ENRICHMENT

28

Whether you work with a rescue or a shelter, it's important to have realistic expectations about placing the pit bulls in your care. It can take an average of 6 months to a year (or longer) to find a home for just one adult pit bull. Quality of life for the dogs should take precedence over quantity.

28

FOSTER HOME SUCCESS



29

Who is going to hang? Who is going to be reliable and in it for the long haul? Who will follow-through. Will they be able to handle puppies through adolescence? When they can't handle a dog anymore, will they bail on the dog? You have to know that every foster home is committed to the dogs they take into their care.

Educate your foster homes first. Stress with them that long-term foster commitment is a must. Foster parents should understand the pros and cons of fostering pit bulls. Don't skimp on educating fosters about the breed. Candidates for fostering should have a good working knowledge of the breed, and be accepting of the breed's challenges. Someone who is willing to listen to advice, and is not afraid to ask questions or voice concerns.

29

SUPERVISION IS KEY



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If dog aggression starts to become an issue, a foster home must be prepared for the possibility that they may need to permanently separate a foster pit bull from their other dogs in the future. No amount of temperament testing in the beginning can determine the possibility of future dog compatibility issues (particularly for young dogs). Good training, prevention and supervision is the key to avoiding potential problems. Fosters should be proactive daily (5-10 minute training sessions multiple times a day).

30

ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP PLAN



31

Start slow and avoid overwhelming foster homes with multiple dogs. Safety should be your first priority. Packing a foster home with multiple pit bulls (especially a new foster home), is a one-way ticket to trouble. Emphasize that you will not tolerate a foster home that hops from dog-to-dog; dumping one dog back on the rescue just so they can take another one from somewhere else. Despite all your best efforts and planning, stuff happens. Always have a backup plan ready in case a foster home falls through. Check for BSL in a foster home's city prior to giving them any dogs. Breed specific laws apply to foster homes too!

31

VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT



32

Provide guidelines for volunteers and foster homes. You need to know where your dogs are and how they are being taken care of. So it is crucial that volunteers communicate with you on a regular basis, especially if they are having any issues or problems with the dogs in their care. Make it clear, that fosters are volunteering on the terms that YOU set for them. If you are depending on these people then you need to know where things are at and where you stand. It should be made quite clear up front, that you make the rules – and they need to be followed for the safety and well-being of the dog – as well as for the safety of other dogs/people in the foster home. To avoid duplicating efforts, appoint someone to coordinate the volunteers and give that person clear directions on the authority they hold within the group. Make sure that person understands that you need to be kept in the loop.

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BUSTER FOUNDATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS



33

Holding regular training seminars is a great way to empower foster homes and volunteers. Basic obedience, understanding dog behavior and how to incorporate that into day-to-day training are basic skills that promote healthy relationships between volunteers and their dogs. Back in February of this year, Beverly A. Morgan, a certified dog behaviorist. Went over the importance of leadership skills, understanding from the dog's perspective. Referencing Jan Fennell (who she trained under). Dogs learn more quickly when they are given the opportunity to find out for themselves, through positive reinforcement, that their good behavior results in good things:

www.thinkcanine.com

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TRAINING SEMINARS FOR FOSTERS



34

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Last October, volunteers and supporters came to Arbor Dog Daycare to help us take the Buster Dogs through a 3-hour workshop and dog-handling class with trainer Danny Davis. Previously training days were held at Currey's Family Pet Care in Romulus, leash handling and walking skills. How to handle reactive dogs appropriately in public. Doing obedience training alone isn't enough to help repair the breed's image. Encourage foster homes to be proactive, and work continuously on dog-leadership skills. 5-10 minute training sessions, multiple times a day. Foster parents should be taught how establishing leadership skills should go hand-in-hand with obedience training.

EMPOWER YOUR VOLUNTEERS



35

35

Engaging the dogs in regular training sessions in foster homes helps the dogs be more tolerant and accepting of other dogs when they are working together in training groups. When they have something to do, it helps lessen their reactivity to other dogs.

Holding group training days helps to strengthen the bond between foster families, volunteers and their dogs. Hands-on training empowers volunteers and helps them understand training techniques better because they are not just having somebody relay the information to them. They are experiencing it first-hand and have something tangible to hold on to. It's gratifying to the foster individual and the dog. They make a connection on a deeper level.

WEEKEND FOSTER HOME ENRICHMENT



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36

Buster Foundation volunteers also provide weekend kennel enrichment to the dogs in the care of the main foster home. This involves daily and weekend assistance from volunteers who come out to exercise the dogs, work on walking/leash manners and basic handling skills. Treadmills, interactive toys, baths, crate cleaning, yard cleaning are all part of the program. Volunteer education and mentoring should be ongoing.

BENEFITS OF KENNEL ENRICHMENT



37

Due to their people-loving nature, many pit bulls do not do well in long-term kennel situations. Warehousing dogs in boarding kennels with little to no human interaction for months – or worse yet – years on end is NOT rescue, it's cruelty. Mental deterioration, refusal to eat, hiding in the back of their kennel, temperament changes, etc. are all signs of kennel stress. Kennel stress can turn a wonderful, happy dog into a miserable, un-adoptable mess. Addressing their physical and emotional needs is such a cohesive and integral part of rescue, and should not be ignored.

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CASA DEL TORO QUOTE

"Kennel Enrichment is engaging animals' minds and bodies through a variety of mental, physical, and sensory activities, designed to keep them from deteriorating in the static environment that is shelter life."

Casa Del Toro Pit Bull Education and Rescue (<http://qualityoflifeforsheltersdogs.wordpress.com/>)

38

"Kennel Enrichment is engaging animals' minds and bodies through a variety of mental, physical, and sensory activities, designed to keep them from deteriorating in the static environment that is shelter life... Days go by and the animal begins to exhibit behaviors such as acting out, spinning in their kennels, barking continually, panting, pacing, growling, and lunging at the kennel door. Some begin to retreat to the back of their kennel appearing as they have just given up on any hope. These are all signs of kennel stress. Kennel Stress is something that "can be avoided" and "can be helped"."

Casa Del Toro Pit Bull Education and Rescue Blog
www.qualityoflifeforsheltersdogs.wordpress.com

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ADOPTABILITY INCREASES



Photo courtesy of Casa Del Toro www.casadeltoro.org

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Kennel enrichment programs help improve the quality of life for shelter dogs and increases their chance of getting adopted. Spending time away from noisy kennels in a quiet environment helps dogs de-stress. Activities may include: Basic obedience, problem solving puzzles, grooming, agility training, massage, play groups, talking soothingly to the dog and having snuggle time. Physical and mental stimulation release pent-up energy and help provide positive redirection of high energy levels.

Photo courtesy of Casa del Toro
www.casadeltoro.org

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KENNEL STRESS REDUCES



Photo courtesy of Casa Del Toro
www.casadeltoro.org

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Kennel enrichment programs should also expand on the social experience for the dog, not just keeping them in the kennel or in the shelter facility. You are not going to get an accurate assessment of a dog if they are just totally contained in a shelter. You have to know in a less controlled environment how the dog is going to respond. Is she relaxed? Comfortable? Is she extremely stressed? Once you answer these questions, you will know what areas you have to continue to work on.

Photo courtesy of Casa del Toro
www.casadeltoro.org

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SAMPLE KENNEL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Casa del Toro (Indiana)

- ▶ Program information
<http://casadeltoro.org/Kennel%20Enrichment%20Program/Kennel%20Enrichment.htm>
- ▶ New! Kennel enrichment program blog
<http://qualityoflifeforsheltersdogs.wordpress.com/>

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Want to start a volunteer-based kennel enrichment program at your local shelter or within your rescue? Reach out to other reputable rescue groups, individuals and orgs to help you further with this much needed proactive work with the dogs. Reach out to local trainers. Look outside the box, be innovative.
Casa del Toro (Indiana).

Program info and program requests
<http://casadeltoro.org/Kennel%20Enrichment%20Program/Kennel%20Enrichment.htm>

New KEP (Kennel Enrichment Program) blog! Videos on the blog!
<http://qualityoflifeforsheltersdogs.wordpress.com>

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SAMPLE KENNEL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Animal Farm Foundation (New York)

- ▶ Keeping shelter dogs happy, healthy and sound:
http://animalfarmfoundation.org/view_article.php?id=134
- ▶ Handouts
<http://animalfarmfoundation.org/files/file/Tools%20for%20Enrichment.pdf>
- ▶ Internship program for shelter staff
<http://www.animalfarmfoundation.org/articles.php?category=7>

42

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Internship program for shelter staff:
www.animalfarmfoundation.org/articles.php?category=7

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GETTING YOUR ADOPT-A-BULLS NOTICED

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There are over 20,000 pit bulls and pit bull mixes listed on www.Petfinder.com right now. In Michigan alone, there are over 600 pit bulls and pit bull mixes listed. The first thing a potential adopter will see is the picture. Are the pictures on your page of good quality?

43

GREAT PICTURES



44

PICTURES are top priority for getting your dog noticed. Here are a few good examples:

Happy Coco, what a great smile!

44

NICE SHOT!



45

Fantastic puppy shot, the color of the flowers really complement her coat color.

45

SUPER
SENIOR
SMILE!



46

Dooley has a super senior smile that shows older dogs are full of life and ready for fun!

46

KISS-A-BULL
FACE!



47

What a kissable expression on Coltrane! This photo really shows off his sweet personality.

47

BIOGRAPHIES

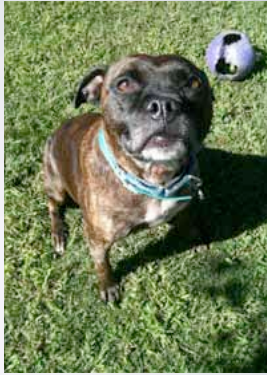


48

Biographies: One sentence simply won't do. Potential new owners want to know as much as possible about the dog you have listed before committing themselves. Avoid a negative bio that only focuses on a dog's sad story, keep bios positive. List your foster pit bull's favorite activities, is your pit bull a big clown? Does he have a favorite toy? Has he learned a new trick or command? The more info you can provide the public about your foster pit bull's personality, the more likely he will be noticed on Petfinder. We have also found that including the dog's weight really helps get them adopted, as pictures can be deceiving, and people's interpretations of what small, medium, and large mean can vary widely.

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UPDATE PHOTOS REGULARLY



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Videos showcasing a dog's talents and temperament are also important in attracting potential adopters. If you haven't updated your adopt-a-bull pictures, videos or biographies for 3 months it's time to refresh and do so. Updating regularly will help give your dogs a better chance of getting noticed online. Don't have the time or resources to get great pix or write engaging bios? Just ask! Ask volunteers, friends and past adopters to help you spread the word that you are looking for help with photos, videos or writing bios.

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PHOTO AND BIO TIPS

<http://www.pbrc.net/tips.html>
<http://bulldogs.info/pbrcpits/tips.html>



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Tips on taking photos and writing bios at these two links:

www.pbrc.net/tips.html

www.bulldogs.info/pbrcpits/tips.html

50



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Another fantastic resource to help get your dogs adopted is by listing them on Pit Bull Rescue Central's website. PBRC is a pit bull education website that lets you list adoptable pit bulls for free (proof of spay/neuter required). Best of all, PBRC's knowledgeable volunteers will help pre-screen adoption applications for you! Did we mention that PBRC's site is also chock-full o' fantastic information on the breed, recommendations for shelters/rescues, and much more?

www.pbrc.net

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PLACEMENT

How NOT to set a dog up for failure

52

Public misconception of the breed due to media hysteria has put the weight of the world on the shoulders of ALL pit bull owners. In order to help restore the reputation of these noble dogs, rescues and shelters must strive to place pit bulls with the best, most responsible adopters possible. Irresponsible mistakes lead to proliferation of breed-specific laws.

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SPAY AND NEUTER



53

Need we say more? Don't take a chance of adding to the overpopulation of these dogs by sending out an intact one! Rescues should always spay/neuter adult pit bulls prior to adoption, no excuses. Spay/neuter contracts don't work. Unless you are asking for a hefty refundable deposit (\$100 or more), and have the resources and time to verify, don't leave it to chance. Shelters that are not able to spay/neuter prior to adoption should provide low cost spay/neuter clinic information to adopters to encourage compliance. When possible, shelters should enlist the help of volunteers to make follow-up calls and maybe even offer to help transport dogs to-and-from sterilization appointments. What about puppies? We recommend foster-to-adopt contracts for younger pups. The adoption is not finalized until after sterilization.

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CHECK FOR BSL FIRST!

Updated Michigan BSL list
<http://wonderbull.com/blog/bsl>



54

Don't waste your time or the adopter's, always check for BSL in their city first. We do not recommend adopting a dog out to someone that lives where BSL exists, even in a city that has breed restrictions. Why? Because once you make a legal distinction that pit bulls need to be managed differently than other dogs, it opens a door that you may not be able to close. A city that already has restrictions can easily upgrade to a full out breed ban.

You can find an updated list of Michigan cities and their pit bull laws here:
www.WonderBull.com/blog/bsl

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APARTMENTS, CONDOS, AND TRAILER PARKS... OH MY!



55

Avoid placing a dog with a renter; too often, rental properties will not allow pit bulls, or may change their minds after the dog arrives (another rescue here in Michigan experienced this recently). If you do decide to place a dog with someone that rents, owns a condo, or lives in a modular home community, get written proof that the landlord or condo association will allow pit bulls.

55

MULTIPLE DOG HOMES



56

Consider placing pit bulls as only dogs, or with one other dog of the opposite sex. While some pit bulls may get along with other same-sex dogs, those cases are more the exception, than the rule. If you do place a pit bull in a home with another dog, it is essential that the adopter already has good control of their current dog's manners and training. Don't place a pit bull (or any other breed of dog) into a home with a dog that has behavior or training issues.

56

OWNER EDUCATION



57

The biggest challenge with placing a pit bull is owner education. Every breed has their pros and cons. Potential adopters must show that they have a clear understanding of the breed challenges. Placing a pit bull in a responsible home with adopters that understand these challenges, is the key to a long-term, successful adoption. The ultimate pit bull parent is someone who has realistic expectations, and understands the importance of not setting their dog up for failure. On-going training, diligent monitoring of all dog-to-dog interactions, and encouraging good breed ambassadorship is key. Most importantly, a good pit bull owner will not rush head-first into situations that can put their dog at risk. Prior breed experience is a definite plus.

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SUCCESSFUL ADOPTIONS



58

If a potential adopter insists they know "all about pit bulls" make them prove it to you! They should be able to tell you what they know about dog aggression levels, prey drive, high energy, etc. And they should be willing to listen to any additional breed info you may want to give them. A lot of future behavior will be predetermined by the groundwork set by the rescue or shelter going in. As with any breed of dog, behavior evolves as the dog gets more comfortable in its new home, and as the dog matures. Do everything possible to facilitate a successful, long-term adoption. Stress the importance of exercise. Encourage adopters to continue to do socializing, training, and practice proactive leadership. These should continue throughout the life of the dog, and will help the adopter to better handle any behavior issues that may arise in the future.

58

PREVENTION AND MONITORING



59

Most people aren't as proactive as they need to be when managing their dogs. Prevention and monitoring are the key. Don't leave pit bulls alone with other dogs or animals (especially if your dog has high prey drive).

59

CONTAINMENT



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Emphasize the importance of containment on the adopter's property: Encourage adopters to add locks to yard gates to prevent accidental escape or entry by someone looking to steal their dog. Electronic fences are not appropriate as many terrier breeds have a high tolerance for pain and will blow right through an electric shock if they are determined to get to something on the other side. Even Boston Terrier rescue recommends against using them, yup, Bostons will blow right through one. Electric fences also do not prevent other dogs, animals or people from coming into your dog's yard.

60

MONITORING IS KEY



61

If the pit bull is in a multiple dog home, the dogs should be fed separately in crates. Adopters should monitor their dog's activities (indoors and out). Stress to adopters the importance of not setting their dog up for failure in this BSL and lawsuit-happy environment.

61

BREED ADVOCACY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Educate...educate...educate!

62

Rescue is not just about moving dogs, we have an underlying responsibility to the breed to advocate for these dogs by educating the public about pit bulls every chance we get. We are being dissected and overly criticized. Word-of-mouth is a powerful thing, use it to help restore the image of these noble dogs. The breed's reputation is in your hands.

62

ADOPTER RESOURCES AND EDUCATION



63

Offer adopters classes and other resources post adoption. Don't leave anything open to interpretation. Do everything possible to facilitate a successful, long-term adoption. Empower owners to help them better understand their dogs. Give them the tools and direction they need to respect and understand how a dog thinks. Offer adopters resources to help train their dogs to be good breed ambassadors. Encourage them to take classes in agility, to be therapy dogs, get their CGC, etc. These activities help exude confidence and further strengthen the human-canine bond.

63

OWNER
GIVE-UPS
Educational opportunity



64

Take the time to listen. It's part of what we are obligated to do. You may just save a dog's life. When you get a call or email from an owner who wants to give up their pit bull, don't just tell them, "We don't have room". Get a history, find out what their problems or reasons are. Offer advice and resources. The more resources we have to offer them, the more likely we can help them keep their dog.

Pawsitive Impact for Pets 

"Keeping pets and their loving owners united"

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Contact www.PawsitiveImpactForPets.org


PIP Volunteers strive to answer all inquiries within 24 hours.
Email: PawsitiveImpactForPets@gmail.com
Phone: (517) 618-1988 (1728)

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You can refer owners to Pawsitive Impact for Pets (PIP). A new Michigan-based non-profit dedicated to keeping pets safe, healthy and united with their owners. By providing information, resources and counseling, PIP strives to reduce the number of pets abandoned, surrendered, or euthanized for non-medical reasons. PIP provides one-on-one counseling to owners needing assistance with behavior problems, medical expenses, housing changes and general cost of care.

www.PawsitiveImpactForPets.org

MAKE THE MOST OF
PUBLIC EVENTS



66

MAKE THE MOST OF PUBLIC EVENTS

Offer free breed educational fliers and brochures at adoption showcases and fundraising events. No need to reinvent the wheel. There are plenty of free breed educational fliers available for downloading at:

www.PBRC.net/flyers.html

<http://network.bestfriends.org/campaigns/pitbulls/default.aspx>

www.BadRap.org/rescue/search.html

SHOW OFF YOUR BREED AMBASSADORS



67

Only the best breed ambassadors should attend events, a dog that is reactive and doesn't show well in a crate should stay at home. Don't add to the negative stigma of the breed. Volunteer monitoring during event is paramount. Volunteers should keep a close eye out for any potential problems. Such as those little fluffy dogs on flexi-leashes with oblivious owners ;0). Stop people before they let their personal dogs get too close to a foster dog's crate. We really shouldn't have to say this, but never, EVER let a child walk foster dogs during events. Should you let your foster dogs hang out on-leash or in a crate at events? Safety first. Nose-to-nose greetings are also a big "no-no". Remember, don't set your foster dogs up for failure!

67

BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

68

BSL, otherwise known as Breed Specific Legislation, is any law that bans or restricts ownership of dogs based on breed alone. For the last two years, Michigan has been a hotbed of BSL activity. Currently (as of 3/25/2010) Bay City, Bay County, Saginaw, Lincoln Park, and Scottsville are considering restricting or banning ownership of pit bulls. Saginaw is looking to restrict ownership of 10 breeds!

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WHAT IS BSL?



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"Breed-specific legislation (BSL) is any animal control ordinance that is aimed at only certain types of dogs based on their breed. Some people mistakenly believe that appearance can predict a dog's behavior, so they want the dogs who "look scary" to be removed from the community, or at the very least, regulated with restrictions on how they must be kept."

Quote used with permission from our friends at IndyPitCrew
www.IndyPitCrew.org

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BSL IS A FAILURE

I am **NOT** a pit bull!



70

"Breed specific laws target responsible dog owners, waste precious community resources, are difficult to enforce, and do **NOTHING** to prevent dog bites. Cities around the world **AND** in the United States are repealing BSL in favor of breed-neutral ordinances that focus on the **BEHAVIOR** of the dog (and punish problem dog owners) – ordinances that include **PROACTIVE** components that allow animal control to act before there is an incident."

Quote used with permission from our friends at IndyPitCrew
www.IndyPitCrew.org

70 Photo: Purebred American Bulldog

WHAT CAN **YOU** DO?



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Keep an eye out for articles targeting pit bulls in the headline. Often you'll see an article of a dog attack or an incident with police. Articles like this can be a catalyst for future proposed laws in your city. Even if BSL is **NOT** being proposed in your city, you should attend your local city council meetings once every couple of months, to familiarize yourself with what's happening in your community. Establish a relationship with local officials **before** an incident happens. Offer to help your legislators if they ever have any questions on dog or pit bull related issues. Taking the time to talk to legislators lets them know that you are an active member of your community, that you care what happens in your community, and that you are there to help if needed in the future. Legislators look down upon residents that only show up to meetings to complain. If you are attending a BSL meeting, let the council know that you want to help, offer solutions.

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BE POLITE AND RESPECTFUL



72

Remember, always be polite and respectful when writing or talking to local officials. Never call them names, no name-calling, ever. And please do not call officials "ignorant", it makes them feel that you are pre-judging their capacity to listen to what you have to say. No blaming the victim of a dog attack, it just makes you sound like an insensitive jerk. Avoid comparing BSL to the Holocaust, to racism, or to gun ownership. Comparing one hot-button issue with another will only inflame and further aggravate the situation. Discrimination is an acceptable term to use in place of racism. Residents rule! Legislators want to hear from residents first. If you live in a targeted city, encourage friends and family members to end meetings with you to show their support. If you are not a resident, try to connect with one and collaborate efforts.

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LEARN MORE

www.StopBSL.com
www.DefendingDog.com
www.Understand-a-Bull.com



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"The best defense is a good offense, so before the next time BSL is proposed, educate yourself on the truth about BSL, the facts about "pit bulls" and the breed-neutral alternatives that are proving successful in other communities."

Quote used with permission from our friends at IndyPitCrew
www.IndyPitCrew.org

Learn more:
www.StopBSL.com
www.DefendingDog.com
www.Understand-a-Bull.com

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HELP US STOP BSL IN MICHIGAN

www.wonderbull.com/blog/bsl



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Help us STOP BSL in Michigan! Join our BSL email notification Yahoo group today. Receive alerts of proposed BSL in Michigan only, coordinate with other residents, and share best practices for speaking out against BSL.

MichiganBSL Yahoo! Group
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/michiganBSL>

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Q&A

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Got questions? Please feel free to contact us:

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