

“Ban the Deed, Not the Breed”

"Legislation is due, laws are in order, and the situation is out of hand. Let's be sure of our focus. Laws are for humans, not for animals who have no say about the captive environment they must endure." -Rod Jones

Breed Specific Legislations are a group of laws that are set to ban specific breeds from certain areas. These are becoming the law maker's answer to highly publicized dog attacks. This is both costly and ineffective. This act will not stop criminals, who are more than likely the ones with aggressive dogs, from having these dogs. They will see it as just another law that can be broken and will not care if the dogs are found, confiscated and killed because they didn't care about the dog in the first place. On the other hand, responsible dog owners are having their dogs, which have never hurt a soul, removed from their homes and disposed of for no reason other than the breed with which they were born. Just because a dog is a "pit bull" does not make it a dangerous animal. As such, just because a dog is a Labrador doesn't mean it is safe. The breed of a dog does not determine its demeanor; the environment and owners mould the animal into what they want it to be. An innocent animal should not have to pay the price for doing what its owners tells them. These dogs are victims of how they are raised and trained. They do not have the same sense of right or wrong as humans do, they do as they are told and act on the basis of how they have been shown in the past.

A "Pit Bull" is not actually a breed at all. It is a characterization that lumps a few different groups of breeds together, the American pit bull terrier, American Staffordshire terrier, and Staffordshire bull terrier. So, when statistics place the amount of 'pit bull' attacks against other breeds, they are placing a group of breeds against a single breed. This negates the truthfulness of these statistics. Many times in the news a dog bite will occur and a "pit bull" will automatically be targeted when the dog responsible for the attack was not a "pit bull" at all. In one such case, the Diane Whipple case, the breed involved was a Presa Canario. This is a strong large breed dog with no connection whatsoever with any of the pit bull breeds. However, when the news came out the 'pit bulls' were targeted and once again blamed for something that wasn't their fault. This is an example that 'pit bulls' are no more dangerous than any other dog with the same strength and size; they have just gotten a bad reputation in the recent years. The 'pit bull' was first bred as a baiter of bulls in the 1800's. Once this sport became illegal they were then used for dog fighting. Because of this some "pit bulls" may be dog aggressive. This however is something that is very avoidable with a responsible owner.

Many people are afraid of "pit bulls". Is it the bad press they get? Is it because their breed is used in many dog fights? Or is it a fact-based truth that "pit bulls" are inherently aggressive and deadly? The "pit bull" breeds actually have a strong drive to please their owners. They are strong, athletic, intelligent, and loyal. That sounds like everything you would want in a dog. Years ago this breed was one of the most popular breeds in America. Many famous dogs were 'pits.' "Petey" from the little rascals as well as the most decorated WWI dog were both "pit bulls". These dogs were bred for their devotion to people. Theodore Roosevelt and Helen Keller both owned "pit bulls". An inherently aggressive dog would be the last thing you would want as a service dog. Yet, even now there are many "pit bulls" serving their people and helping them to do

everyday things they would otherwise be unable to do. A recent study performed by the American Temperament Testing Association found that 'pit bulls' scored a rate of 83.9%. Not only was this a passing rate but it was higher than both the beagle (79.7%) and the golden retriever (83.8%)! This test consists of a series of confrontational situations in which any signs of panic or aggression leads to immediate failure of the test. This alone should put to rest the belief that pit bulls are inherently aggressive towards people. It is true that the "pit bulls" are very strong and because of this fact their bite will most likely leave more of a mark than a yorkies would. But, just because they are strong does not mean they should be punished for it. Over the past 30 years there have been fatal dog attacks from over 30 different breeds. These breeds included the Yorkshire Terrier, dachshund, and Labrador Retriever. These breeds are known to most as 'family pets,' but they are responsible for fatal attacks on humans. "Pit Bulls" are not at the top of the list for dog bites over the last few years. To the contrary the number if pit bull attacks is decreasing. So, why are "pit bulls" singled out?

Technically, breed specific legislation would be a very hard law to uphold. This would include being able to state which breed a dog actually is, which in some cases needs to be left up to an expert. Other ways of decreasing aggressive canines are available and seem to be easier and superior to a breed specific legislation. An attack by a neutered male has never been recorded. For this reason, a law that mandates the neutering of all breeds within the 'aggressive' breeds could immensely decrease the amount of dog bites. The only exception to this law would be for licensed breeders. Another way to decrease the need for breed specific legislation would be to educate dog owners on the signs of aggression and to train the owners on how to deal with this and rehabilitate their dogs. Heftier penalties should be placed on the owners of these animals instead of the animals paying the price. Temperament specific legislation would be another way to decrease attacks. This would focus not on the breed but on the individual dog. It would look into its bite history, temperament, and nature of the bite. Ethically I feel there is no way to justify slaughtering an innocent animal purely for the acts of others of the same breed. The first option should not be death for all that are similar. The first option should be rehabilitation and education for those who allow these actions.

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