

## Pit bulls get a bad rap

By Dr. John de Jong / Askk the Vet | Sunday, July 4, 2010 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Lifestyle

Dear Dr. John,

I have been reading and hearing a great deal about pit bull dog attacks lately. I have owned pit bulls for years and they have always been well trained, good natured, and shown no signs of aggression around people or other dogs. I raised three kids with pit bulls in the home and never had any problems at all.

Despite efforts by myself and other responsible pit bull owners, our dogs continue to get a bad rap. Various towns are adopting legislation or ordinances outlawing the dogs. I would like to hear your comments regarding the breed and whether you think they should be banned, as some are proposing?

- A.O.

Dear A.O.,

It's nice to hear about nice pit bulls from a conscientious owner - it gives me the opportunity to address the misperceptions regarding the breed.

People using the term "pit bull" generally mean one of the following breeds: Staffordshire terriers, bull terriers, American bulldogs or the pit bull terrier. They are very strong and lean muscled animals.

Without question, they have been given a very bad look in the media and in most cases bad ownership has not been addressed. I often comment that my experience with the breed is much like all other breeds - I have known and treated many sweet and docile pit bull dogs. Granted, some are aggressive, but I see the same with other breeds.

German shepherds, Doberman pinschers and other breeds have been the bad guys at various times, but pit bulls have dominated that image for awhile. That's because they are bred for fighting, to be used by drug lords in the cities, etc. They are given names like Cujo, Killer, Death, etc. The people who own these dogs often reward them for aggressive and mean behavior, which leads us to the current problem. Truth be told, several years ago the cocker spaniel racked up the most reported bites!

I do not endorse breed-specific legislation of any kind. The best thing owners like you can do is to show the public what good dogs you have and educate people about the breed.

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