

Show Some Love for the Pitbulls

By Paul Callahan

Pitbull Terriers are currently one of the most misunderstood breeds of dogs out in the world. Pitbulls have been linked to aggressive behavior towards humans, other dogs, and even children. Personally, I am a huge fan of all dogs, big, small, fluffy, and ‘aggressive.’ I had never had an experience with a pit bull until late last year. Around November of 2018 one of my roommate’s girlfriend was told that her next foster dog would be a three-year-old female Pitbull named Maui. Most of the dogs they had fostered before were much smaller and considered to be more tame than this one. All of the people in the foster house did not have any prior experience with Pitbulls either, so they didn’t know what to expect. Their initial reaction, like most, was feeling concerned about how to train her, and if she was going to be well-behaved or as aggressive as they are commonly portrayed in the media. One of the biggest misconceptions is that Pitbulls are always aggressive, but like most dogs, those that have had past owners who neglected or abused them tend to develop in a more defensive and less trusting manner.

Maui’s previous owner did not treat her appropriately thus the need for a foster family. My roommate's initial reaction was quite concerned, but his girlfriend was determined to make Maui feel safe and welcome in this new home. I interviewed my roommate’s girlfriend and asked her questions about training, her thoughts before getting Maui, and her thoughts after taking care of her for three months. She said “I knew within the first five minutes of meeting Maui that she was a sweetheart”. Since Maui is three years old she still has quite a bit of energy, so when she started to get comfortable in the house she would sometimes be a lot to handle. She also discussed that out of all the foster dogs to train, Maui was the most work, but that does not make her a threat to other dogs or humans.

I also asked her about what one of the most difficult or saddening things to see when going out in public with Maui was, and she said that “Something difficult to see was while going on walks, if another individual was approaching us, they would tend to cross the street in order to avoid Maui. They did not even give her a chance to make their own impression.” One time, they decided to take Maui to a dog park and they had nothing but positive things to say about her experience with the other dogs and owners. She was playing and running around like any other dog would.

Pitbulls look scary and can be aggressive if they are trained that way. There is a misconception that the only people who own them are drug dealers or thugs. In these cases, they would be training the dogs to attack or be aggressive towards trespassers and unfamiliar faces. There is also a misconception that all four different breeds of pit bulls are fighting dogs. According to an article regarding the same subject on national geographic, “they don’t have that

heritage. The fact that they get lumped in is part of the problem because we're basing things on what they look like and not necessarily what they are". This is why it is hard for people to see pitbulls as individuals. Like every child, they are born and raised into a family. How that family nurtures them and treats them plays a key role in who they develop into. This lumping of breeds together goes hand in hand with the news stories being reported about fatalities caused by dogs. In reality, you have a 1 in 10 million chance of getting killed by a dog in any given year in the US. Sadly these are the only news stories that get reported about Pitbulls which is why there is such a negative stigma around this specific type of breed. At the end of the day, Pitbulls are like any other dog. How they are raised, trained, and treated will have a major impact as to what type of dog they will become.

http://www.humanesocietyhbg.org/Media/pdfs/Pit_Bull_Myths.pdf

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/07/pit-bull-ban-aggressive-dog-breed-bronwen-dickey/>