

## **Pinkbulls are the Newest Accessory**

*By Jiva Jimmons*



Photo by Rebekah Nemethy

Pitbulls are the “poster child” for aggressive dogs. They are characterized to maul and injure innocent victims; society has blamed their genetic makeup for their behaviors. We have instilled this negative stereotype by creating restrictions and laws impose on this specific breed in many public areas.

Petco and Petsmart are two of the most common pet store companies. At Petsmart’s Kennel hotel, pitbulls must be placed in their own individual kennel and have a separate play time from the rest of the dogs. Only siblings of a pitbull can be with them in the same area and time. Other than that, pitbulls are isolated from other dogs. However, at both Petsmart and Petco, they are welcomed in the store and are upheld to same standards as any dog that comes into the store. An employee told me that any dog in the store, simply must be on a leash and not be aggressive towards a person or another dog. Also, muzzles were not necessary for pitbulls, at both stores.

I spoke with Charice King, one of the founders of Shamrock Rescue Foundation, a grassroots 503© non-profit company. They rescue animals from kill shelters and those in need of medical attention. They find them foster homes and try to get them adopted by a forever family.

King felt that pitbulls are not an aggressive breed; if the owner is responsible, making sure they know their dog is safe. She believes a pitbull’s capability to be aggressive is determined on how the owner treats and raises the dog. These tendencies are not genetic but nurtured by the owner over time. For any dog to behave, she says takes, “time and effort”, ensuring these dogs are safe to other people.

Although her thoughts are valid and bring up a good point, Shamrock Rescue Foundation, does not foster pitbulls of any kind through their site. The reason was left unsaid by King.

Stephanie Hogue, a Master in American Studies student from Kennesaw State University, wrote in 2017, a rescue tactic that might increase the adoption of all breeds of pitbulls.

Hogue explains that, historically, pitbulls, were once seen as a family pet in the 30's. However, they became associated in the media with hip-hop artists and the Black and Latino in urban communities, specifically male. "They are consistently portrayed in the media as perpetrators and/or fatal dog bites," Hogue states.

She discovered the perception of a pitbull can be effective by who their human handler is. She tested this theory by displaying pictures of a pitbull with either a tattooed adult male, elderly woman or a boy (male child) in a survey administered to a randomized group of people. The results concluded that when the photographs with either the elderly woman or boy, the pitbull is perceived to be less aggressive compared to when the dog is paired with the tattooed male.

The pitbull's image heavily relies on the context that surrounds this breed of dog. The stereotypical framework of pitbull is perpetuated by individuals and the context that they believe indicates the aggressiveness of the pitbull. However, Hogue counteracts this belief by publicizing the idea of Pinkbulls.



She believes this aggressive stereotype can be changed through photographing pinkbulls. There are many photos and social media accounts, where pitbulls are dressed in attire that makes them look sweeter and softer. Feminizing these dogs creates a space for a new image and name for pitbulls. Hopefully, this movement can increase their adoption and owner retention rate of this breed.

Learn more about Charice King's Foundation and see the profiles of dogs up for adoption, following this link;

<https://www.shamrockrescue.org/>

If you would like to read more of Hogue's paper, go to this link;

[https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=mast\\_etd](https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=mast_etd)