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American Pit Bull Terrier

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The American Pit Bull Terrier has been known by many names, including the Pit Bull and the American Bull Terrier. It is often confused with the American Staffordshire Terrier, however, the United Kennel Club recognizes the American Pit Bull Terrier as its own distinct breed. Affectionately known as "Pitties," Pit Bulls are known for being a loyal, protective, and athletic canine breed.

Physical Characteristics

The standard size of the Pit Bull varies from medium to large, with a weight range of 30–90 lbs. The Pit Bull has a stocky, muscular build and a short, smooth coat varying in color. The fluctuation in the size and color of the Pit Bull is due to the breed being a mix between different types of Bulldogs and Terriers.

The body of the Pit Bull is long, with a short, whip-like tail that ends in a point. Small- to medium-sized ears are set high on its broad, flat head. The most defining facial characteristic of the Pit Bull is its wide, powerful jaw.

Personality and Temperament

The protective and fearless Pit Bull is noted for its playful temperament and friendly nature. The Pit Bull is also athletic, and has a strong desire to please people.

The Pit Bull has a high prey drive due to its being bred to chase and subdue livestock. However, the Pit Bull is not naturally aggressive towards people and is affectionate toward children. Depending on early socialization and handling, the Pit Bull can learn to restrain itself from unwarranted aggression towards other dogs.

Care

Because it is a highly energetic and active breed, Pit Bulls require daily exercise — the more vigorous the better — to overcome boredom and possibly destructive behavior. Like the Greyhound breed, Pit Bulls have a particularly strong prey drive, and are driven to chase retreating animals. Taking Pit Bulls on leashed walks is undoubtedly an important part of socializing them to "play nice," however, care must always be taken to keep the Pit Bull on its leash, to prevent it from running off if it should spot a potential prey animal.

Health

Due to their athleticism and diverse breeding background, Pit Bulls tend to be a hardy breed, with an average lifespan of 12 to 14 years, longer than many breeds of a similar size. There are some genetic conditions to be watchful for. Pit Bulls tend to suffer from bone diseases such as [hip dysplasia](#), [degenerative myelopathy](#) and [kneecap dislocation](#). Pit Bulls can also suffer from skin problems, such as [mange](#) and skin allergies, because of their short coat. Other health ailments Pit Bulls can develop include [thyroid](#) and congenital heart defects.

History and Background

The Pit Bull's origins can be traced back to early 19th-century England, Ireland and Scotland. The canine's ancestors were the result of experimentally crossbreeding different Bulldog and Terrier breeds for the purpose of bear- and bull-baiting, a blood sport in which the dog was trained to attack until the larger animal was defeated. When baiting was banned in the 1800s, the dogs were then bred for the sport of rattling and dog fighting. European immigrants introduced the Pit Bull breed to North America.

Because of its controversial origins, the Pit Bull is not recognized by the American Kennel Club. This has resulted in the formation of two separate clubs for the specific purpose of registering Pit Bulls. The first was the United Kennel Club (UKC), which was formed in 1898 by founder C. Z. Bennett. The founder's dog, Bennett's Ring, was assigned UKC registration number one, making it the first registered Pit Bull in recorded history. The second club, the American Dog Breeders Association (ADBA), began in 1909 as a multiple breed association, but it has been dedicated mainly to Pit Bulls, as the original president, Guy McCord, was an avid fancier and breeder of the American Pit Bull Terrier.

Contrary to its dubious reputation as an aggressive breed, the Pit Bull is regarded by many as a friendly dog with an outgoing disposition. As those who are loyal to this breed are becoming more active in the education and training of the breed, the Pit Bull is fast becoming a popular companion pet.

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