

The Myths of the Aggressive Dog Breed.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) describes the breed as follows. The American Staffordshire Terrier is a happy, outgoing, stable and confident dog, who makes a wonderful family pet. Over the past 50 years careful breeding has produced today's American Staffordshire Terrier who is affectionate, reliable, and an especially good dog for children.

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier Breed Council of Great Britain and Northern Ireland also quotes. Total reliability with people and in particular children.

Unfortunately all began in the country of Germany with an article who did win even the Egon Erich Kirsch prize for journalism back in 1978. Published in "Geo" this spectacular article about dog fights from Benno Kroll was that impressive and did receive widespread attendance to attract the attendance of persons who got in that moment the idea of how to make money with people placing bets on such dog fights and those who needed some status symbol to let their self-confidence and acceptance in their groups grow. The author comments: I know that I'm guilty. After having published that article, I was contacted by numerous readers, who just wanted to know the addresses of the American breeders. Unsuspectably and naive I handed out the addresses, not knowing what could then happen. From Germany the message of how easy that breed was to abuse – evoked by the inability of the German government to prosecute this, Russian and Turkish breeders did spread the misused breedings into their countries and where they lived as immigrants, reaching also again the American pedigree country. The inadequate reaction – first of the German government, again - did manifest a traditionally fixed misreaction in that short-generational creatures. The law to strictly use leash and muzzle generated an imposed aggression, just because of strict ignorance of scientific research.

There are not such indications from any point of view that this breed is more aggressive or dangerous than other breeds. Just myths are existing from that article back in Germany 1978 created. But – of course – because of their strict obedience they may be an endangering means for criminals.

Karen L. Overall's "Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals" is a reference for veterinary medicine and Dr. Irene Stur is a most-respected expertise in Europe for the breed. Numerous articles were published on the fact, that myths and wrong decisions of the German government especially did create the dilemma for the breed, that was over the last years exported into other countries.

Karen L. Overall, page 88: "Canine aggression is the most common behavioral problem in dogs seen at behavioral practices and is the most dangerous one seen in pet dogs." This is a fact – and it is regardless of breeds. The dog is the oldest companion of mankind and has a very special status in the evolution of Homo Erectus and domestication. "It is important to realize that aggression can be an appropriate response in certain contexts. Defense may be an appropriate form of aggression. A dog that attacks visiting friends as they hug their hosts is responding inappropriately and out of context". A dog who tends to attack people running away or sweating or lifting the arms without reason, is just misunderstanding reactions. The human being as the more intelligent part in communication is strictly going to risk to evoke this reaction consciously by will and knowledge. These are examples of the missing sense of responsibility of the yellow press and the insensibility of the decisions of the German government in the reaction of the, by the press, created hysteria. "Dogs that aggressively defend their people from rape, theft, attack, or attempted murder are considered heroes,

regardless.” In all such circumstances, I would classify the aggression as appropriate and in context. But it should not kill – for example in the case of rape. “The latter distinctions emphasize the dog’s ability to make fine, contextual decisions.” “The scenario of police or guard dogs is an example of learned aggression. These dogs are taught to exhibit aggressive behaviors in response to patterns of provocative events”. Those responses are generated by will of the human trainer and the pattern need to be chosen carefully to train a reaction. No one but would expect that those evocative patterns are octroyed irresponsibly by journalists and politicians – as seen in Germany. And even having the chance to be manifested by tradigentecial mechanisms. “these are ethical issues that should be discussed and argued in forums free from myth if we are to understand canine aggression and decrease risk from it” “the term provocation must be discussed in the context of a dog known to be aggressive in certain circumstances compared with a dog that has never reacted in those circumstances. ... For abnorm animals, normal gestures will not be perceived as such, ...” “It is important to realize that dogs exhibiting inappropriate, out-of-context aggressions are not misbehaved or poorly behaved – they are clinically abnormal and must be regardes as such.”

“In the United States, more than 1 million people per year report dog bites (August, 1988, Beck et al., 1975, Harris et al., 1974), many bites result in death (Borchelt et al., 1983b, Winckler 1977). One study estimates that 10 people die in the United States each year as a result of dog bites. (Young 1988a).”

“Of 96 cases in the *Veterinary Record* 85% occurred in the owners home. 62% represented adults bitten by their own animal.” “Clearly breed-specific characterizations should be viewed with caution.” “Underreporting and underexamination of dog bites is unfortunately a reality, even ...”. Not so with the in the yellow press present breeds. Everyone reports in those cases and fuels hysteria, which in reverse fuels misbehavior in communications.

“When solicited for a collaborative study on the demographics of dog bites in urban areas, it became apparent that no one on the staff had the time or inclination to do so, despite the findings of the Delta Society, the Humane Society of the United States, the American Humane Association, and others (Felthous, 1980, Felthous & Kellert, 1987, Rigdon & Tapia 1977, Tapia 1971) that some classes of dog bites can be good indicators of child abuse. When resources are stretched thin, it is the scientific method and pursuit of solid data that suffer most. The child abuse / animal abuse association deserves more attention.”

“Repeated bites, which are a function of the carnivory and shake-and-kill behaviors, that dogs can display in such circumstances may be a clue that they are confused about signals and context. In any excitable state of the participants might be less aware of shifts of motivational state or willingness to participate than they would under calmer circumstances. The potential for bilateral misunderstanding and inappropriate reaction with concomitant disastrous circumstances is great.”

“The variation in the genetic component is sufficient to produce a wide array of individual behavioral phenotypes in the absence of any specific breed.”

“.. that if someone has selected a breed for protectiveness or guarding” or a society puts an inadequate measure – like muzzles on untrained older individuals of a breed – “some of the individuals in that breed may inappropriately” react “against objects that pose no threat (Green & Woodruff, 1988).”

“It is no surprise that high trainability characterizes most working or guard dogs, but this may be a teleological result.”

“Any discussion of breed-specific aggressive propensities must be viewed in a critical light that includes such considerations in combination with the abovementioned problem of the “apparency” of popular breeds” Discussed were before the breeding of Springer Spaniels for the ring with head held high and forward, rostral posture, stance of forelegs and shoulders.

“Careful statistic reading of the literature indicates three findings: 1. The breeds most represented in the in the dog bite data change rank with time, this may indicate changes in breed preference by owners, rather than changes in breed-specific aggressive tendencies per se. 2. The breeds most frequently represented are popular ones, and no one breed may be represented in the bite data in disproportion to its occurrence in the population. Good data on population size of each breed and mixed breeds are unavaiable. 3. The term pit bull us widely applied, often without biological basis, to a range of dog types, regardless of the underlying genetic stock. (Lookwood & Rondy, 1987, Sacks et al., 1989, Segrest & Clifford, 1986a,b) This latter problem is probably magnified in areas that have already experienced one publicized “pit-bull”.related attack.”

“Investigations of unpredictable aggression have produced no firm results regarding heritability (Reinhard, 1978, Van der Velde et al, 1976, Willis, 1989).”

“Testosterone acts as a behavioral modulator that makes dogs react more intensely.”Neutered females are overrepresented, despite fear aggressions which is obvious by the sense of life – conservation of genes. The same happens with humans, only in the reproductive cyclus fear from death exists – not so with children or the elderly.

Conclusion: There is no such sign, that specific breeds are subject to any form of breed-typic aggression or have from constitution or force of bite a specific dangerous aspect.