

The Responsible Pitbull Owner

Adoption - what that means:

Adopting a dog is a big responsibility but more than any other breed adopting a pitbull is a huge responsibility. You have made a commitment for the lifetime of the dog. Because your pitbull has a good chance of already having had multiple homes it will be up to you to stop the cycle and create a well adjusted and mannered pup. Irresponsible owners are forming the bad reputation of American Pitbull Terriers. With your help we can change the terrible view society has on this incredible breed.

A responsible Pitbull owner must be the guardian of the dog. To love a pitbull means to never put him or her in a questionable situation that might create a problem. Your job is to keep your pitbull safe at all times.

Pitbulls:

Are smart, funny, loving dogs that have a huge amount of energy. They will need lots of exercise and mental stimulation. You can not physically wear a pitbull out so games that exercise their brain are important. There are lots of toys available on line and in stores that mentally challenge and add variety to your dogs life. Pitbulls can also be very stubborn. Training is a must with your pitbull. When training is done in a fair and creative way it will only increase the respect your dog has for you.

Did you know that pit bulls have been icons through out history? Pete on The Little Rascals TV show was a pitbull. The mascot of Buster Brown shoes and RCA was a pitbull. The pitbull was also the mascot for the US Military in world war I and II and was the most decorated war dog. Popsicle was a pitbull found during a drug raid in an abandoned freezer, saved and trained as a police drug dog and now fights the crime that he was once so familiar with.

According to the American Canine Temperament Testing Association, 85.3%of the American Pit Bull Terriers that took the temperament test passed, compared to an average 81.9% passing rate for all other breeds. the test places the dog in a series of confrontational situations. The first sign of aggression or panic is a failure of the test. Pitbulls achieved the fourth highest passing rate of all 122 breeds.

How to have an excellent pitbull:

Be knowledgeable:

Let's face it some people are fearful of the breed. It does not matter if you disagree or feel that your pitbull is perfect. It's not about you, it's about your dog. It's your job to change their mind showing them how great a pitbull can be. Never let the dog run up to someone you don't know, instead assume that they are nervous and approach slowly making them feel more comfortable or in some cases know when not to approach at all. It's your job to read the public's body language and reactions as well as that of your dog. A responsible owner with good dog handling skills will put people at ease.

Learn about your pitbull:

If you have adopted a pitbull from a shelter and don't know what the dog has been thru it will take time to fully understand him or her. Take it slow and observe your dog in each new environment. Learn what might bring on anxiety, make them nervous or even fearful. Also, watch to find out what your dog LOVES to do. Understand that it will take at least 2 weeks before you can truly have a good idea of his or her the temperament. You should start with long walks in easy environments to create a strong bond with your dog. When you bring your dog home from the shelter have a game plan of where the dog will sleep and what the routine will be when you are home and at work. Planning ahead will only make things easier on both of you.

Leashing your pitbull at all times:

Do not allow your pitbull to run loose at a park or even in your neighborhood, especially if he or she is not trained enough to come to your commands. You are creating a potentially bad situation for your dog. Even if another dog attacks your pitbull the chances of you getting blamed or sited for having a dangerous dog are possible. The risk increases if your dog bites someone or provokes a fight. This could lead to the possibility of the dog being destroyed. If your pitbull is leashed and under complete control and another dog approaches, it is that owners responsibility to control their dog. Doing this correctly makes for a very responsible guardian of your dog.

Introducing your pitbull to other dogs:

It's very important to know if your pitbull is dog friendly. Meeting

other dogs should be a slow process and should not be attempted until you have had the dog for at least 2 weeks. This will give you the time to earn trust and respect from your dog that you will need when in a new situation. If you are having a hard time controlling your dog under normal circumstances, it will only be harder under exciting situations. With your pitbull on leash find a willing friend to meet you in a neutral location, not either home. Take both dogs for a walk leaving some space between you. Watch the dogs behavior; how are the ears and tail? Are the ears perked up and tail wagging? How is the other dog reacting? If both dogs are exhibiting no anxiety, you can make a small introduction by letting them smell each other. Continue on the walk getting closer together taking each step slowly. Dogs are very keen on picking up stress from us even in our voices. Most often coddling and talking in light tones can cause an adverse reaction. Keep your emotions in check and level. Sometimes the best thing is to say nothing at all. Make sure your direction is clear like "heel" or "wait" - don't allow your dog to dictate the pace of the walk.

If your dog is barking and ears are back this is not the time to introduce the dogs. Continue to walk with the dogs at a safe distance. Sometimes new smells and places can distract the dogs and allow them to relax.

Socializing your pitbull:

If your pitbull is dog friendly it's very important to keep him socialized with other dogs. There are a number of great dog daycare facilities in Billings. This is an excellent tool not only to keep your dog social but also to wear your pup out. They are getting both physical and mental exercise. It only takes one or two times a week, even half a day, to accomplish this.

The strength of a pitbull:

A pitbull is a very muscular dog and depending on your size and the dog's size he or she may easily be able to overpower you. Be aware of this and do not allow the pup to pull you while on a leash. As a guardian you must have control over your dog. To do this you and the dog need training. Walking your dog on a loose long leash can be one the best ways to teach your dog that you are leading. Take time in your yard to teach the dog to follow you on a leash.

Habitual Training

With any dog always remain calm. If the dog's behavior is not

acceptable learn to correct in a calm tone. You must establish who's boss and it must be you. Pitbulls can be emotional and sensitive so using harsh training techniques are not recommended. Hiring a good trainer would help immensely. Marty Golden with Big Sky Dog Training is a certified canine trainer/behavior specialist who is experienced in behavior modification. He can teach you how to become a better dog handler. He can be reached at 406-967-3044.

Housing of a pitbull:

Never chain up a pitbull. This can create a "fight or flight" fear and can turn any dog into a dog with aggressive tendencies. Think about how you would feel if you were chained to a tree and the neighbor kids came over to harass you. Pitbulls can go "cage crazy". Housing your pitbull in a small enclosed area is unacceptable. A fenced yard is a must. Be aware that there are those who would like to steal your dog. There is dog fighting in this area. The best fence is a wood or privacy fence to shield the dog from the street.

Last but not least:

Enjoy your pitbull! This is a wonderful breed that will make you laugh on a daily basis. They are loyal and loving with great personalities. They are open to doing anything with you, from taking a long hike or watching a good movie on the couch. You will find a life long best friend in your American Pitbull Terrier.