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The puppy prejudice

Katy Humpert, Jayplay writer
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I'll never forget the morning I received the phone call. On that Saturday morning, my friend Damien told me Rocky had been detained by the police in Pittsburg the night before. What had he done? I had never seen Rocky act aggressively toward anyone. He was the type of dog who immediately loved everyone he saw, choosing to smother strangers with kisses or wag his tail so fast he looked like he could fly away like a helicopter. I couldn't imagine him doing anything to merit being taken into custody. Then Damien explained the terrible truth: Rocky was in trouble not because of his actions, but because of his over-sized head, powerful jaws and muscular body.

Rocky is a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, a breed of dog most often classified as a pit bull. Pittsburg is one of more than 30 Kansas towns with laws that ban or restrict pit bulls. These types of ordinances are called Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) and are a fast growing trend nationwide, with bans on pit bulls in major cities like Denver and Cincinnati. BSL most commonly targets pit bulls. As a result, more than 380 dogs were put down based on their breed this summer in Denver alone.

El Dorado is another town that bans pit bulls. This law affects all pit bulls, not just strays. This means that anyone with a pit bull wanting to move to El Dorado must either get rid of the dog or move outside the city limits. Denver is facing the same problems, with some residents choosing to move rather than give up their pet. Brian Shepherd, mayor of El Dorado, says the city instated this ban in 1988 in response to a growing number of biting incidents by pit bulls in the city. He says pit bulls were specifically targeted because of their physical strength and temperament.

Targeted by the media

1970s – German Shepards

1980s – Doberman Pinschers

1990s – Rottweilers

According to Marcy Setter, from Pit Bull Rescue Central

Even though he agrees that the real problem is the owner: breed pit bulls specifically for fighting or as attack dogs, St says banning pit bulls is the only real way to protect against possible fatal incident.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Preventi 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs every year, with c these bites resulting in fatality. And, while pit bulls and Rot responsible for close to 75 percent of these fatal bites, the emphasizes that there is no measure to determine which t more likely to kill. The American Veterinary Medical Assoc National Association for Animal Control and the American Club all agree.



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Home	Pit bulls have a bad reputation. Just saying the word can evoke fear in some people who immediately story about a pit bull killing a child somewhere.
News	
Sports	Courtney Brennaman, Shawnee sophomore, says she thinks pit bulls are more aggressive than r She attributes this belief to news stories about their violent behavior. "I've never heard of, like a SI killing somebody," she says.
Opinion	
Jayplay	Marcy Setter, director of marketing and public relations at Pit Bull Rescue Central, says the news along with general ignorance, is responsible for pit bulls' bad reputation. She says they have been chosen as the "current media monster."
Features	
Tongue in Beak	
Photo Galleries	For this reason, stories about pit bull attacks make national news, while attacks by other breeds o rarely mentioned.
Videos	
Archive	Another problem, according to Jennifer Thomas, creator of www.stopbsl.com, is misinformation in In 2001, Diane Whipple was mauled to death by two Presa Canarios in San Francisco. Thomas s news reports misidentified the dogs as pit bulls.
Classifieds	
kansanApartments	"I still talk to people today who remember the dogs as pit bulls," Thomas says.
Campus Coupons	Contrary to media reports and dog ordinances, a pit bull is not a breed of dog. Thomas says a pit term that encompasses three breeds of dogs, the American Staffordshire Terrier, the American Pi Terrier and the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. She adds that pit bulls come in a variety of shapes and s look strikingly similar to a dozen different breeds of dogs. For this reason, legislation banning pit b not ban a genetic breed, but dogs that simply look dangerous.
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Contact	Moreover, the pit bull breeds are not generally more aggressive toward humans than other dogs. According to the American Temperament Test Society, a not-for-profit organization that tests breeds for temperament, the pit bull breeds rank very high among other breeds for their friendly disposition. They even outrank Golden Retrievers.
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Lawrence has a dog ordinance that seizes dogs only if it has attacked or threatened humans or other dogs. Sue Hack, Lawrence City Commissioner, says even though the commission discussed instating a BSL, research has shown that BSL has serious flaws.

Regardless of a dog's genetic traits, Thomas says the dog's owner is ultimately responsible for the dog's behavior. She says any breed of dog can become dangerous t owner's neglect or abuse.

"BSL deals with dangerous dogs in a completely backwards fashion; it holds dogs responsible for owners' actions," says Thomas.



Photo contribution: Kat Damien Annuschat's you bull, Rocky.