Pit Bull Reputation Essay, Research Paper

Fighting, attacks, and vicious are words thought of when one mentions the American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT). Society definitely portrays the APBT as an inherently violent. Groups have even gone so far as to demand breed specific legislation. These groups wish to ban the APBT. Some even go as far as genocide. Negative articles towards the APBT exist in abundance. Does the breed itself deserve all of this negative attention? What has given this dog a bad reputation? Is there anything good about this breed? These are all very important questions which the answers to may shock some people.

To understand part of the APBT s reputation, it is important to understand the infamous history of this breed. The APBT is a breed that descends from old time bulldogs in England. These dogs were used in a form of entertainment called bull baiting. This is a very violent sport where a group of these dogs would be put against a bull. It was said that this practice tenderized the meat before slaughter but the only purpose it had was to line the pockets of the man who organized the event. This practice was ultimately deemed illegal in 1835. The dogs that possessed great skill at this were looked upon as heroes. The consistent breeding of these dogs created aggressiveness towards other dogs in this breed. An inhibition to attack humans was also bred into the dog. This made the dogs great for fighting each other. The dogs were placed in a pit and the fights would end with a pin or till the death. Violent acts and occurrences like these have made the APBT seem very deserving of a bad reputation. Also, not helping the situation is the bad publicity the breed gets from the media.

In an attempt by reporters to sell papers and an attempt to ban dog fighting by the Human Society of the United States many stories have been blown out of proportion. Often times, when reporters are unsure of the breed, they will call the dog an APBT just to sensationalize a bite. Also, often times the Bull Terriers, Boxers, American Bulldogs, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, and dogs who are mix breeds are mistaken for purebred APBT s. In all actuality, German Shepherds, Chow Chows, and mixed breeds are the top three biters. In one instance, a man was taunting an APBT. This dog eventually bit the man in the leg. The press then wrote that the dog bit of the man s leg and he died. In all actuality, the bite was minor, and the man died because of mistreatment of the medical attendants. In another well publicized attack, a camera crew films a small female animal control worker approaching a house. All of the sudden, a lady opens the door and an APBT comes running out and immediately latches on to the lady s arm. This attack has appeared on such shows as Maury Povich, Real TV, and When Animals Attack. This attack seemed almost planned. Why would there be a film crew at a routine dog seizure? Why didn t the camera crew help the woman instead of just filming? Why did they send a small woman equipped with only a snare to pick up this dangerous dog? What makes this seem extremely fishy is that the film crew received an award for this footage. The APBT seems to appear more frequently in the news than not lately, and always for negative publicity. Things like this have sparked movements for breed specific legislation.

Breed specific legislation can be reasonable but in some forms are ridiculous. It can vary from muzzle laws to banishment or even genocide. In one specific article, a man suggests that the APBT should be eradicated. If not that, he suggests that $1 million liability policies be mandatory, muzzles, $1 thousand dollars a year to keep them licensed, and strict repercussions against the breakers of these laws. If a dog is caught and is not licensed or is out and has no muzzle it will be gassed. This is an approach that is too severe. There are around 52 million dogs in the U.S. There are only 12-15 fatal dog attacks a year, along with 800,000 serious enough to require medical attention. There is an average of 93 deaths a year due to lightning strikes. So, a person is more likely to die from lightning than a dog. It is obvious that the dog has the potential to be very dangerous. It has tremendous jaw power and overall body strength. It has a high threshold for pain and is very persistent so it is hard to break this animal from attacking. But just like something as deadly as a gun, education is the key.

When any dog is mishandled, it is a threat to society. The APBT may become more dangerous because of its physical attributes; however, it is no different than a cocker spaniel that has been mistreated. The type of people that mishandle APBT s are often drug dealers, people who hold illegal weapons, people who fight them, or just people who want them because of their bad image. These types of people are obviously not good for this breed. These people often train these dogs to be aggressive towards humans and other dogs. The dogs are also often left on a chain or in a very rickety pen. With the APBT s ability to climb all sorts of things including chain link fence and its strength, these modes of restraining/holding captive the dogs are futile. These dogs often escape, and with their lack of socialization, attack anything they want to. These people often breed dogs also. When these people breed these dogs, they are trying to attain an aggressive disposition. They also may breed these dogs and sell them, distributing a defected form of the breed. A man who shall remain anonymous spoke about the use of the APBT for fighting, protection of drug houses, etc. He stated that these dogs are bred for traits that are not wanted by a normal dog owner. These dogs are also very unsocial. The owners of these dogs do not give these dogs the love they need for fear of attachment. The owners know these dogs will die sooner or later. Think of a human who has been isolated from normal situations. Certain situations have seen humans that have been locked up in a room all their lives or been isolated from humans in some other form. When these humans come into contact with the real world, they often lash out. They can never conform to society s norms. This shows how any living thing can be a detrimental thing to the public. Under the control of good handlers, the APBT is one of the best overall dogs that exist.

The APBT is one of the best family pets available. They have excellent temperaments and are very great with children. In a reason test, the American Canine Temperament Testing Association studied 122 breeds on their temperament. The APBT s received a score of 95 percent compared to the average of 77 percent; this score of 95 percent was the fourth highest of all the breeds tested. They are extremely loyal and serve their masters willingly. They are very intelligent and have a mind of their own, which sometimes comes off as stubbornness. These dogs are also just great companions. Obviously, these dogs are great for protection. They love their masters and will guard them against any harm. These dogs have short coats and do not shed much. This makes grooming easy, and there is no worry for fur all over furniture. These dogs crave affection from their owners and return it likewise. I am currently own and have owned APBT s. I have also owned many other dogs. I have found that these dogs are best all around that I have come into contact with. Other dogs I have owned include Rottweilers, German Shepherds, Black Labradors, Pekingese, and the Dachshund. I have also been around such dogs as Boykin Spaniels, Brittany Spaniels, Golden Retrievers, and many others. The APBT still prevails as number one in my heart as the all around dog.

This dog used to be very well respected in the United States. I say it is time to attack the owners and breeders of these dogs who do poor jobs raising them. Just like many things in nature, man can corrupt the APBT. These dogs have done nothing wrong; instead they are being blamed for what their owners have done to them. Governments should make laws to attack owners and breeders instead of the dogs. The answer lies in regulations made to keep a close eye on owners and breeders. There should be a crack down on pit fighting itself, not the breed. Future owners should be screened and monitored by such entities as animal control. Breeders should be monitored closely also. There would probably always be some sort of underground/black market selling of these dogs, but let s not punish the responsible owners of these dogs by banishing this dog. Instead, let s work around that and approach this with more common sense. Look past the stereotypes and see the APBT for what it really is: a wonderful breed whose reputation has been spoiled by the media, poor breeders, and mishandling by owners.