

# The Straight Scoop on PETA and Pit Bulls



## What is PETA's position on pit bull-specific legislation?

PETA does not want to pull pit bulls out of good homes. What we want to do is prevent any more litters. Just as we support mandatory spay/neuter legislation for all dogs (and cats) because it is the most effective way to combat the companion-animal overpopulation crisis and its tragic consequences, we support banning any further breeding of pit bulls. We also favor restrictions or a ban on "ownership" of pit bulls that would, however, not affect the status of those pit bulls who are already in good homes. In other words, we support bills that include a grandfather clause allowing pit bulls who are spayed or neutered and already cared for to maintain their status for the rest of their lives.

## Are breed-specific laws fair?

There are many wonderful dogs in animal shelters who need homes, and PETA urges everyone who can provide a permanent, loving home to adopt a homeless dog (or two) from a shelter and speak out against all breeding. When shelters are being forced to euthanize dogs by the millions every year, it is counterproductive for the humane community to fight efforts to reduce the population of pit bulls or any other breed of dog through breeding bans and restrictions. Pit bulls are abused, neglected, and tortured specifically because of their breed and characteristics; PETA does not object to efforts to protect pit bulls from breed-specific abuse through the use of breed-specific safeguards.

## Why does PETA take this position?

Pit bulls are the most exploited, abused, and neglected dogs of all. They are seemingly the most abundant breed in animal shelters as well as the most difficult to place safely because of theft, abuse, and the possibility of attacks on small animals, other dogs, and human beings. In New York City, pit bulls make up 40 percent of the 12,000 dogs who are housed by the city's shelter system, which handles between three and five cruelty cases involving pit bulls every week. As far back as 2000, an ASPCA query to shelters about their experiences with pit bulls revealed that 35 percent of responding shelters took in at least one pit bull a day, and in one out of four shelters, pit bulls and pit-bull mixes made up more than 20 percent of the shelter dog population. One-third of the shelters did not adopt pit bulls out to the public, partly out of concern for the dogs' safety. According to The Humane Society of the United States, pit bulls constitute an increasing percentage of victimized animals in media-reported cases: In 2000 and 2001, pit bulls were the victims in 13 percent of reported dog abuse cases, but by 2007, that figure had risen to 25 percent. As of this writing, PetFinder.com lists more than 16,976 homeless pit bulls available for adoption.

## Other animals are abused. Why doesn't PETA take the same position on all animals?

Until there are no homeless animals in shelters, PETA would love to see a ban on all animal breeding, period! If breeding and acquiring animals were not so easy and if adopting or selling an animal were handled with the seriousness that it deserves



## In the News ...

- ▶ Pit Bull Found With Ears Cut Off
- ▶ Woman Guilty of Starving Pit Bull
- ▶ Pit Bull Puppy Found Frozen to Death
- ▶ Pit Bull Puppy Found in Trash Bag

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In addition to being the most abused, pit bulls are also the breed most likely to be stolen, usually for fighting, even out of “secure” animal shelters holding the dogs as evidence in criminal cases.

- ▶ **Man Robbed of Pit Bull Puppies at Gunpoint**
- ▶ **Man Attacked; Pit Bull Stolen Near Adams High School**
- ▶ **Pit Bull Puppy Stolen Right in Front of a Wichita Couple**
- ▶ **Pit Bull Thefts May Be on the Rise in New Hanover County**
- ▶ **Pit Bulls Recovered in Dog Fight Probe Stolen From Pound**

(e.g., if prospective guardians had to pass a course and show the financial means to meet their animals’ medical and other needs and were required to think long and hard and make a lifetime commitment), far fewer animals would be discarded at animal shelters once the novelty wore off. But the reality is that there is big money in exploiting pit bulls, and for many “owners,” having a pit bull just means possessing something macho as a status symbol, not to enjoy the loyal companionship of a loving dog. Fighting and breeding pit bulls can be very lucrative. Pit bulls have become a commodity, and for them, the consequences are often eyes swollen shut with blood and pus, broken or torn-off limbs left to “heal” with no veterinary care, ears cropped at home with scissors, and infected, untreated wounds—things that animal shelter workers see on a regular basis.

### Where does PETA stand on “rehabilitating” fighting dogs?

Rehabilitation, when possible, is right only if it results in what every dog needs and deserves—a good home with a devoted family who will responsibly and lovingly provide care for life, not life in a small pen in a “sanctuary.” PETA is opposed to confining dogs to cages, crates, and pens indefinitely—that is not an acceptable life for a dog, as their behavior shows us. The expectation that fighting dogs might somehow be rehabilitated and then placed in a good home makes the hard work of animal control and law enforcement officers even more difficult and, in some cases, prevents them from



seizing dogs abused in this gruesome industry. Attempts at rehabilitation make people feel good, but they come at the expense of other animals in need. After all, there are plenty of dogs, including pit bulls, who haven’t been fought, who don’t require rehabilitation or the money to pay for it. They are literally dying for homes. To require a shelter to destroy those adoptable, homeless dogs (or close their doors to them) to make room for fighting pit bulls—who are virtually impossible to place responsibly—causes suffering and ultimately destroys even more animals.

### What does PETA do to make the world a kinder place for pit bulls?

PETA’s spay/neuter clinics—which to date have sterilized more than 112,000 dogs, cats, and rabbits—offer sterilization surgeries for pit bulls free of charge. Unfortunately, virtually none of the pit bulls we encounter in the field—in rural North Carolina and Virginia—has ever set foot indoors. They go back to their owners after surgery and are put back on a chain or in a pen. Our Community Animal Project (CAP) provides hundreds of them—who would otherwise have nothing but a piece of plywood leaning against a fence, a plastic barrel, or a metal drum as “shelter”—with sturdy, wooden doghouses; straw bedding in winter; flea, tick, and flystrike prevention in the summer; toys; transportation to and from our clinics; and a big dose of affection.



If only these dogs’ parents had been spayed and neutered.