

# CODE OF ETHICS FOR PIT BULL RESCUE

## I. Introduction and Mission Statement

**Introduction:** This Code of Ethics was compiled by a committee of seasoned rescuers and members of the Pit Bull Owners Alliance. It serves to provide guidelines for Pit Bull Rescuers. The term "Pit Bull" as used throughout this document refers to dogs believed to be purebred American Pit Bull Terriers (or American Staffordshire Terriers). Foster homes employed by signers of this Code of Ethics shall also be bound by the guidelines set forth herein.

**Mission Statement:** The Ethical Pit Bull Rescuer holds restoration of the pit bull breed as paramount to their mission and activities. He/she holds public perception of the pit bull in the forefront of each decision and endeavor, and strives to place only the best representatives of the breed into homes that are fully capable of providing adequate care and training. Additionally, the responsible Pit Bull Rescuer understands that such activities require extensive knowledge of pit bull history, temperament, and behavior, and therefore educates themselves to the fullest extent before presenting themselves as a qualified, ethical Rescuer.

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## II. Guidelines For The Pit Bull Rescuer

**SECTION 1:** Selection of Rescue Dogs For Potential Placement.

**SECTION 2:** Care & Handling of Rescue Dogs.

**SECTION 3:** Placement of Rescue Dogs.

**SECTION 4:** General Professional Conduct.

### **SECTION 1: Selection of Rescue Dogs For Potential Placement.**

1. Only accepts and places breed ambassadors that meet the Standard for Pit Bull Temperament. **(See ITEM 1 - below)**
2. Conducts preliminary temperament evaluations before accepting new dogs. Continues to test dogs in a variety of settings after they are brought into rescue. Holds dogs for at least a month before placing them up for adoption.
3. Will choose among many available dogs for the one(s) that best fit the skills of the Rescuer and within the scope of available resources.
4. When a Pit Bull Rescuer is selecting dogs that are clearly pit bull mixes, he/she will opt for those dogs that are predominantly pit bull and display classically sound pit bull temperaments. **(See ITEM 2 - below).**
5. Will carefully select and place puppies based on the guidelines set forth in **ITEM 3** of this document.
6. When presented with a dog that is not potentially a good candidate for future adoption, Rescuer will either encourage humane euthanasia of the dog, or, if reasonable, will take legal possession of the dog in order to facilitate humane euthanasia.

7. When taking custody of dogs already in the legal possession of an owner or organization, the Pit Bull Rescuer will require the submission of a signed surrender form which clearly states transfer of ownership to the Rescuer.

## **SECTION 2: Care & Handling of Rescue Dogs.**

1. Will provide adequate vet care, nutrition, housing and daily exercise, as well as basic training for each dog.
2. Willing to humanely euthanize any unsound or unadoptable pit bull in his/her possession if the dog presents highly undesirable behavior and/or is incurably ill beyond reasonable veterinary care.
3. Spays and neuters all dogs (including puppies), administers rabies vaccine and microchip prior to placement.
4. Does not breed rescued dogs.
5. Socializes pit bulls with other dogs based on individual temperament. Socializes pit bulls with many people in many situations and environments. Teaches acceptable leash manners around other dogs and trains them to behave as ambassadors before placement.
6. Uses proper containment to prevent dogs from running at large, including: sufficient fencing, crate, dog run and/or kennel at home, and proper use of leash and collar outside of the home. Insists that adopters use the same methods.
7. Acknowledges, understands, and accepts pit bull dog aggression as a breed trait and will follow standard protocol which includes separating the unsupervised pit bull from other dogs to prevent fights and ensure successful interaction between dogs in their possession. Requires the same from adopters.
8. Acknowledges, understands and accepts that aggression towards animals other than dogs is also a trait in the pit bull breed and will carefully manage dogs in their possession to prevent injury to other animals via standard protocol which includes separating the unsupervised pit bull from other animals. Requires the same from adopters.
9. Will not allow pregnant females to go full-term when late term spay resources are available.
10. Will manage, care for, and place puppies based on the guidelines set forth in Item 3 of this document.

## **SECTION 3: Placement of Rescue Dogs.**

1. Screens potential adopters through an application process, interview, home check and reference check. Provides extensive pit bull breed education to the potential home and only places with qualified, stable, competent homes that are able manage a pit bull in a manner consistent with the guidelines set forth in this document.
2. Understands that adult dogs make better adoption prospects over puppies. Educates adopters to the fact that a dog's true temperament and dog aggression potential is not known until maturity (approximately 3 years of age). Does not place dogs under 12 months of age for full adoption. Does not place dogs that have been in the possession of Rescuer for less than one month.

3. Does not place dogs in pairs or groups.
4. Uses legally binding contracts that ensure safe and secure homes for dogs that are adopted. This document shall also provide legal grounds for repossession of dogs that are not being cared for in a manner consistent with the guidelines set forth in this document. The Pit Bull Rescuer will follow up on placement and continue to keep in touch with adoptive homes for an indefinite period of time in order to monitor the dog's progress. Reclaims adopted dogs from situations or circumstances that prove to be neglectful, or unsafe for the pit bull, other dogs/animals or humans, or from homes that can no longer care for them. Reclaims dogs that begin to present with abnormal human aggression.
5. Remains a resource to the adoptive home for the life of the dog. Will work with adoptive home to help remedy any problems and/or issues that arise due to adoption of a pit bull in order to ensure successful life long adoption, if this is reasonable and realistic. Otherwise refer to Section Three: No. 4 above.
6. When using foster homes, the Pit Bull Rescuer will require the submission of a signed foster contract which allows the Rescuer to maintain full control and possession of the dogs.

#### **SECTION 4: General Professional Conduct.**

1. Works closely with local animal control and shelter staff to establish good rescue relationships and will offer breed knowledge and support to shelters and other rescue groups where possible.
2. Presents themselves professionally and responsibly.
3. Acts as a community resource for breed education and information, and provides materials and public outreach where possible.
4. Will not buy dogs to 'rescue' them, as this only serves the breeder.
5. Will label pit bulls and pit bull mixes (see Item 2) as accurately as is possible and will not misrepresent a dog's breed/mix in order to boost adoption interest.
6. Will not label dogs as 'bait' or 'fighting' animals without substantial evidence and/or witnesses (the mere presence of fight wounds does not indicate that a dog was used as 'bait' nor as a 'fighting dog').

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### **III. Additional Information**

#### **ITEM 1: THE STANDARD FOR PIT BULL TEMPERAMENT:**

The 'Temperament Correct' pit bull: seeks out human interaction; is responsive, biddable and eager to please; may be genetically predisposed to aggression towards other dogs or animals; is appropriately submissive; is well balanced and optimistic; enjoys handling; presents good eye contact; is able to be calm in the presence of other dogs on leash or - if initially leash reactive - can learn how to tolerate their presence; is willing to connect with handler during high arousal; can be handled safely even in times of high arousal; accepts a reasonable amount of

confinement; drops arousal levels quickly when removed from a stressful situation; is social with people of all types; is responsive and good natured; is never aggressive towards humans.

#### **ITEM 2: Pit Bull Mixes:**

A. When dealing with Pit Bull mixes, the Pit Bull Rescuer should adhere to the same standard and code of ethics they do when dealing with purebred pit bulls. Pit Bull mixes should exhibit the same temperament as purebreds or be considered unsuitable rescue and adoption candidates.

B. The Pit Bull Rescuer should clearly label Pit Bull mixes as mixes and attempt to identify exactly what breeds the dog is mixed with when labeling.

C. Rescuing pit bulls mixed with guarding breeds is strongly discouraged. Extra caution and care should be taken when selecting and placing those dogs that are mixed with guard dog breeds including but not limited to Neapolitan Mastiffs, Dogue de Bourdeaux, Fila Brasileiro, Presa Canario, Cane Corso, Rottweilers, German Shepherds and others. Since the temperament of the pit bull is very different than the temperament of breeds in the guardian category, such mixes can create unique handling and placement challenges, and should be considered candidates for experienced homes only.

#### **ITEM 3: Puppies**

A. Strong preference for puppies that have both littermates and a temperament correct dam (**See ITEM 1**)

B. Will not rescue the puppies of a dam of incorrect temperament.

C. Considers puppies under 6-8 weeks of age to be high-risk and will not rescue unless moved directly into a setting that includes at least one healthy, vaccinated and well-adjusted adult role model dog able to provide appropriate dog-pup socialization. Due to the possibility of cross-contamination of fatal puppy disease it is recommended that puppies from various litters not be mixed until the health of all puppies is confirmed and adequate incubation periods met.

#### **ITEM 3, Sub Section One: Care of Puppies.**

A. The Pit Bull Rescuer will be well-versed and fully supported and be able to provide comprehensive socialization and evaluation.

B. If a litter arrives without a dam, efforts will be made to socialize puppies remedially through the age of 16 weeks to as many healthy and appropriate adult dogs as possible. This is of particular importance with litters under 8 weeks of age.

C. In the case of single puppy, the Pit Bull Rescuer will attempt to locate healthy, same-aged pups for pup-on-pup interaction after the new puppy's 10-day health quarantine has expired.

D. The Pit Bull Rescuer will maintain puppies in-home throughout the socialization period (16-20 weeks). This practice allows the Rescuer to maximize socialization, and provides opportunities to observe problem behavior as it may develop.

E. Socialization with humans should be considered a prime concern for puppies.

F. Despite best efforts to nurture pups properly, Pit Bull Rescuers must be aware of the influence of nature (genetics) and be willing to humanely euthanize those pups that demonstrate incorrect Pit Bull temperament.

**ITEM 3, Sub Section Two: Placement of High Risk Puppies.**

A. Adoptions shall not be finalized until the puppy is 12 months old and temperament evaluation period is complete.

**ITEM 4: Qualities to Look For in Adopter Candidates.**

1. Has already done good breed research. Asks good questions. Shows willingness to learn more.
2. Is realistic about breed challenges: Dog-on-dog aggression, high energy level, strong willed personalities, pulls on leash, strong and pushy, need to keep socialized to dogs, attracts negative attentions from some public.
3. Shows a stable, mature, open-minded personality.
4. Happy to be interviewed and receive a home inspection.
5. Physically capable of handling a strong dog and demonstrates a calm, confident way with the dog.
6. Wants an indoor pet as a companion animal/family member only.
7. Has had some dog experience, including basic obedience training.
8. Has a reasonably active lifestyle and is prepared to satisfy dog's daily exercise needs.
9. Owns a home or has a secure rental that will allow a pit bull (check those leases!)
10. Homes must provide safe containment: tall, secure fences if yard is present and working latches on gates.
11. The entire household is involved in the decision and is able to help manage the dog (roommates, children, seniors too)
12. Other pets in the home are a good match. No same sex pit bull placements and home understands that pit bull must be separated from other pets when not supervised.

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**This document has been written and endorsed by the following, and may not be altered in any way:**

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