



Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dog

A Best Friends campaign to restore the image of pit bulls and challenge breed discrimination

Dogs identified as pit bulls now include more than 20 pure breeds and an ever-increasing group of mixed-breed dogs. Because of this, short-haired muscular mutts, brindle dogs, and any dog someone thinks is a pit bull is at risk in America today.

“Profiling” dogs in this way implies a simple solution that does not address the real problem. The problem doesn’t lie with a particular breed, but with uninformed or careless owners. Pit bulls suffer from being popular dogs in communities where there is little access to resources that could help increase responsible pet care, particularly spay/neuter services and pet training. They end up in shelters for the same reasons that afflict most shelter animals. Most of them, if not for the stigma, would be considered good candidates for adoption. Sadly, their “brand” has made them an unpopular dog among many people who are likely to adopt a shelter animal and even among some uneducated shelter workers.



Best Friends is working throughout the country to help these dogs, who are battling everything from a media-driven bad reputation to legislation designed to bring about their extinction. Best Friends hopes to end discrimination against all dogs. Dogs are individuals and should be treated as such.

Here are a few facts:

- A number of different breeds of dogs are commonly confused with the pit bull, making breed-discriminatory legislation (BDL) extremely hard to enforce.
- Pit bulls are gentle, loving and loyal. And, like any dog raised responsibly, they make great family pets.
- No breed of dog is inherently aggressive or vicious.
- Resident dogs kept for guarding, breeding or fighting are victims.
- All dogs deserve humane care, socialization and training.

How is Best Friends helping pit bulls?

Best Friends is developing and supporting effective programs to help pit bulls. We are addressing animal abuse and cruelty issues through legislation initiatives and community outreach. We’re providing resources to help with behavioral and medical issues, promoting responsible pet care in the communities where pit bulls already reside. Through public education, we can eliminate inaccurate stereotypes and help pit bulls get back their reputation as great family pets.

Best Friends attorneys draft ordinances and laws that truly protect communities from reckless owners and dangerous dogs. We lobby for passage of good legislation and help stop ineffective or discriminatory legislation. Best Friends opposes breed-discriminatory legislation (also called breed-specific legislation, BSL), which arbitrarily targets particular breeds. Breed-discriminatory

laws are not only ineffective at improving community safety, they are extremely expensive to enforce and deplete needed resources from animal control.

Across the country, Best Friends is helping to draft good, effective laws and is working with local community groups and government officials to ensure that dogfighting operations are reported and participants are prosecuted. We're speaking out for the victims of animal cruelty – those coming from busted dogfighting rings – to make sure they are treated as individuals and are given the opportunity to be adopted or placed with appropriate organizations rather than being automatically killed.

In 2008, Best Friends took in 22 of the dogs confiscated from Michael Vick's dogfighting operation and is caring for and training them at our no-kill sanctuary. That same year, Georgia passed a good anti-dogfighting law that was drafted with the help of Best Friends. Best Friends has drafted legislation, pending in Illinois, that would prevent convicted dogfighters from owning unsterilized dogs once released from prison.

We're increasing public awareness and education about dog discrimination and about what dogs need to be happy and healthy. Best Friends sponsors educational outreach programs like Safe Humane Chicago, a community-wide alliance to combat violence by promoting compassion and caring for people and animals. Safe communities are humane communities and embrace dogs as family. We are also exploring new ways for shelters to market their adoption programs and increase community involvement.

How can you support "Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dog"?

- Support your local animal shelter.
- Adopt or foster "America's Dog."
- Help control the pet population the responsible and humane way: Spay or neuter your dog.
- Support anti-cruelty legislation and legislation that targets irresponsible pet owners, rather than a specific dog breed.
- Oppose breed-discriminatory legislation in any form and speak out on behalf of the dogs targeted. Politics is not a spectator sport!
- Make your dog part of the family: Don't tether or chain your dog as a form of containment.
- Report all animal abuse.
- Keep your dog indoors when you're not home and report pet theft.
- Microchip your dog.
- Share this information with your friends, family, coworkers and neighbors.
- Please donate to the "Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dog" campaign.
- Our campaign needs your voice. Thanks for taking action for animals.

For more information

If you want to know more about "Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dog," go to the campaign website at savingamericasdog.com or e-mail edfritz@bestfriends.org.



"Pit Bulls: Saving America's Dog" is part of Best Friends' mission to bring about a time when there are No More Homeless Pets.