



## YOUR PIT BULL: A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

### PITBULL ADVOCATES FOR COMPASSION & KINDNESS

A well-socialized Pit Bull is a happy and stable Pit Bull on its way to being a breed ambassador. Here are a few tips and guidelines for socializing your Pit Bull:

#### **1. Your Pit Bull will benefit greatly from early positive and fun interactions with other dogs.**

Dogs have a window of time when it's best to socialize them. Early on up to about 12-16 weeks is when you want to provide the most socialization with people and dogs. Of course these should be positive and controlled interactions. Early socialization is key and with continued socialization throughout life your dog will have a better chance of staying social. Note: Even when your dog has been well-socialized throughout puppyhood, he may still develop social issues. This can happen in all breeds dogs. Older dogs may also benefit from remedial socialization with a background that's lacking. Again, even with heavy socialization social issues can still arise. However, if early work is done it is less likely.

#### **2. Never let your Pit Bull just run up and greet another dog it doesn't know on the street.**

This is definitely one way to risk a negative interaction with another dog, and it is also rude canine behavior (all canines, not just Pit Bulls). Likewise, do not allow strange dogs to run up to your dog. This type of "meeting" can lead to an unpleasant altercation, and create a negative experience for all dogs involved.

Keep your Pit Bull distracted by getting him to focus on you and not other dogs on the street. This will also keep the dogs from staring at each other that may also lead to leash pulling behavior. Having your dog stay focused on you and not other dogs will also help prevent leash frustration/aggression.

#### **3. Dogs must be introduced carefully and slowly.**

DO NOT allow the dogs to meet face-to-face. This enables a dog to "stare" at the other dog which can lead to a fight.

DO let the dogs get settled in a neutral environment. One dog should not be just standing in a room waiting for another dog to come in to greet him – the dog in the room can view the room as "his." This also sets up the face-to-face greeting that you never want. Meeting in "claimed" territory or small spaces can set the greeting up for failure.

DO let arousal levels go down considerably before greeting. Let them get used to each other's presence before letting them interact. It is best to take them on a walk side by side first so that they can get acquainted in a non-threatening fashion. Then let them greet side by side if possible not nose to nose. Nose to rear is normal and a good way for dogs to greet.

#### **4. Dogs should not learn to socialize at dog parks.**

Lots of folks use the dog park to "exercise" their dogs to compensate for lack of activity. Dogs may come to the park overly excited and aroused. This can create a free-for-all sort of atmosphere where anything can happen. Your dog can get pushed around by other overly excited dogs, owners aren't watching and well if a fight starts it's a sure bet your dog will be blamed. Also, a fight is a very negative experience for your dog and can cause him to be less social around other dogs, which can lead to fearful behavior and/or make him more reactive to other dogs in the future.

#### **5. Opposite sexes are more likely to get along.**

If you are looking for a new playmate or housemate for your Pit Bull, you would do best to pick one of the opposite sex. Also, please spay or neuter your dog. Dogs that are still "intact" have sex hormones that can make them more reactive to other dogs. Altered pets lead healthier, longer, happier lives and often exhibit fewer behavioral issues. Additionally, chemistry is everything so it's very possible that two of the same sex can get along very well. Again, especially if they're spayed/neutered.

#### **6. Keep your Pit Bull as social as possible throughout his life.**

You can do this by finding friends with balanced dogs. Things usually go well under good supervision after slow appropriate introductions. You should also take him to a good leash manners class that encourages him to be more focused on you and not the other dogs in class by using distraction techniques. Even when you think your dog is perfectly trained, continue play groups often, and classes periodically (or more often, if needed) throughout your Pit Bull's life so he remains desensitized to being around other dogs on leash.