



## THE TRUTH ABOUT CHIHUAHUAS

Over the decades there have been myths told about many breeds including Dobermans, German Shepherds, Pit bulls and now, even Chihuahuas! Below are some facts that dispel some of these myths.

**Chihuahuas bark like any other dog.** Barking is part of being a dog. Chihuahuas are dogs. Many different types of dogs will bark. The amount and type of barking has much to do with the individual dog, his environment, management, and training, especially early on in life. Some owners feel that while they would fully train a larger dog to not bark or act out on leash, they may not do this with a smaller dog, which may potentially contribute to excessive barking behavior. While excessive barking can occur with any dog, curbing this behavior through management and training is key, with any dog, including Chihuahuas.

**Chihuahuas are not predisposed to human aggression.** Human aggression is not a breed trait attributed to Chihuahuas based on the description by the American Kennel Club. While human aggression does occur in all kinds of dogs, it should never be considered to be expected in this breed. The expectation that small dogs can be carried or don't have to be socialized may contribute to an anti-social dog. Small dogs being carried and not getting the chance to stand up on their own, to interact with many people can have trouble later in life. All cases of human aggression should be evaluated on an individual case by case basis and not judged by breed. Please consult a trainer for human aggression in any dog of any kind.

**Chihuahuas are not inherently shivery, shaky or scared.** The American Kennel Club states that Chihuahuas are: "Alert, projecting the 'terrier-like' attitudes of self-importance, **confidence** and self-reliance." Shivering can be a sign of a possible medical condition and should be checked by a vet. We see many confident Chihuahuas and their mixes in shelters. We see fearful dogs too, of all breeds. Fearful behavior in dogs can be caused by many things. It's often due to lack of socialization. Note: It's best if socialization is provided during the critical period up to 16 weeks of age. However, socialization can help at any age.

**Chihuahuas are just as likely to be good with children as any other kind of dog.** Well socialized dogs of all kinds do well around children generally. Supervision between dogs and children is always a must in any setting. Sometimes children may not know how to interact with dogs. It's also key to teach children how to treat animals appropriately.

**Chihuahuas get along with other dogs as any other breed of dog.** A well socialized dog will generally get along with other dogs. This can vary too. Some may be picky about dog friends while others want to be the only dog, regardless of breed or history. But, generally a dog well socialized with other dogs will do fine.

**A note on stereotyping.** Just because some individuals behave a certain way does not mean we should stereotype as not all dogs within a breed will behave exactly the same. Every dog, should be evaluated individually, and not labeled as a "he does this because he's a \_\_\_\_ breed". We're not saying that breeds don't have traits, breeds do have traits. But, this can vary within breeds and stereotyping dogs has proven to actually be deadly and dangerous to breeds of dogs. Judging dogs by how they look can be deceiving. Many mixes are in shelters these days and it can be difficult to tell what breeds are in a particular dog. Certain phrases and myths can keep these dogs in shelters as well. We can't assess breed on looks alone. Dog's personalities can vary greatly as much, if not more, within a breed as they can outside of a breed. No labels please! Keep your eye on YOUR dog for who HE is, not what is projected. That's how we tell The Truth About Chihuahuas, and save lives.

**Marthina McClay, CPDT-KA**