



Pet Talk

Welcome to *Pet Talk*, an occasional column about homeless pets and related topics. Today we're focusing on how potential adopters match up with potential adoptees.

Given the difficulty of finding homes for homeless pets, maybe we need some snazzy online dating sites for animal adoption.

You know, some pet hookup sites like Match.com or eHarmony. So how about something like eRover.com, PitbullsForever, or KittyLove.com?

Consider the much-maligned pit bull "breed." Did you know that the name doesn't signify an actual breed? It's merely an umbrella term given to several breeds of dogs that have similar physical traits, such as a muscular body and broad head.

In fact, the name originated from the cruel practice of forcing terrier-type dogs to perform in nasty blood sports—where dogs were confined to a pen filled with rats or other dogs and then. . . Well, you can guess the rest!

In actuality, at least 5 breeds comprise this group, such as the English bull terrier.

Pits are so strong that, although they may not be inclined to start a fight, it's likely that such dogs will win if goaded into a brawl. As the old saying goes, "A pit bull may not start a fight, but sure will finish it!"

Given the dogs' sad history, and their renowned physical strength, some states and cities in the U.S. have actually outlawed the breed as being too dangerous for public safety.

This includes several cities in Montana. For example, between 1991 and 2018, the town of Libby had breed-specific legislation banning pit bulls.

But talk to nearly any owner and they'll strongly refute the notion that pits are inherently dangerous—because most are as happy and loving as any dog.

Here's an interesting

finding on the effect of breed perception on adoption rates. In one Phoenix shelter, the average length of stay for pit bull-labeled dogs was 42 days. Yet, the result was just 13 days for similar-looking dogs that weren't labeled by breed.

Given this sad info, maybe someone should create an adoption matchup site called "Pity.com" (Pun intended.)

Which brings to mind a touching adoption story that recently appeared in the Washington Post. Vanessa was a cute but unlucky pit bull puppy who basically grew old in a Louisiana shelter. From puppyhood to seniorhood, Vanessa was repeatedly passed by for an astounding **11 years**.

Whoa! That would be like a person spending 7 decades in an orphanage.

Although Vanessa is a sweet dog with no behavioral issues, she was continually passed by in that Louisiana shelter. But several factors were working against her. First, there's the inherently lower pit bull adoption rate. Moreover, seniors and black dogs are often overlooked by potential adopters.

But hooray! Vanessa was finally adopted this year after a local animal lover read the heart wrenching story on Facebook. So senior gal Vanessa now happily romps with the woman's 3 other rescues and the gracious adopter said: "I just want to make her final years the best years she's ever known. . . she's definitely earned it."



Of course, whether you love pits or some other type of dog, there are always plenty available to adopt at the Flathead County Animal Shelter.

To give you an idea of how busy the the shelter has been, last year more than 600 dogs and cats were put up for adoption.

So, if you love pets please consider adopting today! You can also help spread the word among family and friends in rapidly growing Flathead County.

By the way, did you know about the Senior Pet Voucher offered by Flathead Shelter Friends? The free voucher pays up to \$250 toward veterinary care for adopted cats and dogs who are 7+ years old.

For more information, please contact Flathead County Animal Shelter, phone number (406) 758-1310, or visit the website at <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/animal>.

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Personal donations are always appreciated! For more information, see www.flatheadshelterfriends.org