

By way of introduction, my name is Nigel. I am the long suffering husband of Bonnie. I was for a long time responsible for many letters to all and sundry in support of the breed my wife fell in love with. All to no avail. By accident or design, I am one of the two representatives on the Victorian ID Panel from the APBT Club. The others are from Lost Dogs Home, RSPCA, and VCA. When this panel first convened, we instantly rejected the Old ad hoc ID system. Judges with 40 years' experience said it couldn't be done. Sadly, the alternative was total eradication of our breed, so like lambs, we were forced to go along with this shambles. There are too many variables to say what breed a dog is. Unfortunately, our "colleagues" on the panel tend to see it as a challenge to their expertise or worse. Few even acknowledge the APBT as a breed, yet are happy to identify it as such. They cannot see the irony in that.

The laws are such that our only defence of any dog is that it is not a Pit Bull. For that reason it has never been in our best interests to inform the Old Gestapo of exactly what they should be looking for. Their description of a brick shaped head suits us just fine, or did, until they changed it to wedge shape. The dog ID system in Old is such that a Chihuahua can be proven to be a Pit Bull if it suits their experts. (Two hours training, including video, chat. and coffee.)

Paradoxically, most of our time is spent defending dogs which are not Pit Bulls. People who have run foul of the Old ID system are horrified to learn their Staffy X pet of ten years has just been identified as one of "those "dogs. A pedigree Pit Bull with 200 yrs of verifiable ancestry and not one digression from perfect behaviour has no defence and will be destroyed. We defend ALL dogs, in the hope that we can slip a few Pitties through the net.

A brief history.

Opinions vary, but the APBT is probably the nearest representative of the original bulldog. In Britain it became the Staffy, and was also transmogrified into the English Bull Terrier and worse, the British Bulldog. Most likely due to immigration it arrived in America where appearance was secondary. They didn't muck around with a dog that worked. Defence was good, herding was also, and to have a dog that would defend the house, wife and kids to the death was a bonus. Inevitably "My dog's better than yours " arose, and became part of their heritage. By the same token, no one had time for a dog that bit the kids. That crims, junkies and Hollywood, saw the potential in this dog was also inevitable, but it wasn't the killer the media led them to believe. Maltreatment, crossbreeding, and sensationalism solved that problem.

Australia.

Paintings of the goldfields show dogs remarkably similar to Pitties. By the 1980s purebred APBTs had arrived here. In 1991 The American Pit Bull Terrier Club of Australia was formed. As clubs do, we have had our ups and downs. Similar clubs local to their State have been forced to close for various reasons. We have a show every second month, open to all. The Government does ask for our input but don't listen to us.

The APBT is the founding breed of the UKC (1898). You have no idea how hard I had to bite my tongue on hearing from a government expert that the APBT was only recognised by a break away United States organisation. We have retained the original pedigree registrations from the American Dog Breeders Assn (ADBA). Through years of bureaucratic persecution, this organisation has remained reliable.

Today.

American Staffordshire Terrier owners chuck rocks and grind their teeth, but they can't rewrite the history books. In 1936 a group of people wanted a Pit Bull for the show ring. They standardised the appearance of their dogs, but initial registration was dependent on their dog having 4 generations of APBT papers from the UKC. These dogs were initially registered APBTs with the UKC, they were then registered as Am Staffs with the AKC. The breeds have, after 70 yrs, become dissimilar, but any 'expert' wouldn't pick it. To my knowledge the last time the AKC had their books open to allow further APBTs to be registered as an Am Staff was in 1992 and there are many dogs in the US that are still duel registered APBT, AST. These dogs had to pass the Breed Standard for an AST before being accepted. There are no duel registered dogs here in Australia to our knowledge.

After 45 years of dog ownership I still prefer a genuine Heinz, with at least 57 varieties in it. My second choice would be an APBT. So they're not recognized by the VCA, RNSWCC, CCCQ etc? That puts them in the same company as the several other breeds that have no one to speak for them in this country.

We believe that Breed Specific Laws are a complete nonsense and have thus far (to our cost) refrained from commenting on another breed that attacked a baby, German Shepherds which currently lead the list and Cattle Dogs looking for something to round up.

Pick a Dog. Ours is last on the list, but always the first to be blamed. In ten years of fighting breed discrimination from our kitchen table, the silence from the "Dog World" is deafening.

The attached articles describe our usual treatment. You will understand I am reluctant to supply a photo that aids the Government.

NIGEL NORTON

PS. I have attached a couple of newspaper articles that will show you just what we have to endure. The photo in The Age article shows my boy Buster with a young child that he has never met before. The following year a story ran here in the papers about a dog named Chucky being sprung from Werribee Vet clinic.

Take a look at the dog in the picture, its not Chucky sitting there with the number displayed across his chest like a criminal, its my boy Buster! I contacted this newspaper to find out where the picture had come from, only to find out they were part of The Age group & it was the photo taken at our show with the toddler the previous year. This edited photo was still being used up to last year & there was nothing I could do about it. The original photo was appeared in B&W print and was only 2" x 1.5" in size, can't have these dogs look too good, can we?

Buster is now 10 years old and is still just as happy to meet new friends as he ever was, he is not an exception of the breed, he is a TYPICAL example of the breed. (see Bairnsdale pic taken this year). This family have 6 children & he'd never met any of them before this day.



Pit bull publicity 'harmful'

By SALLY FINLAY 9/10/00
URBAN AFFAIRS REPORTER

The Australian National Kennel Council and the Victorian Canine Association do not recognise them. They cannot take part in official dog shows, yet more than 5000 Australians own American pit bull terriers and their numbers are growing.

The Victorian chapter of the American Pit Bull Terriers Club of Australia met yesterday at Dandenong Showgrounds for its bi-monthly meeting and judging event after a week of what president Collin Muir called "typical and harmful publicity".

The controversial breed stepped back into the media glare when *The Age* cartoonist Ron Tandberg wrote last week about his poodle being killed by what witnesses said were two pit bull terriers.

One dog has since been captured and identified as a Staffordshire terrier, and the other dog remains at large.



Tyler-Lee Cooke, 2, meets pit bull Buster. Photo: MARCO BORG

Mr Muir said since the reports he had been contacted by the wrong sorts of people, who wanted to own a pit bull because they were painted as fearsome warriors.

"They are a high-responsibility dog who should be owned by people who have made an informed choice to be an owner," Mr Muir said.

Too often dogs, whatever the breed, were bought by people who did not educate themselves about the dog's character and requirements, he said.

Yet Mr Muir does not support the

Lost Dogs Home stance of mandatory dog-owner licensing, which would require the owner to pass a test.

He said many owners would not register their dogs in case breed-specific laws were introduced. "It's a pretty serious thing to say your dog is banned and we are going to take it from you," he said.

The American Pit Bull Terrier Association was formed in 1991 to run judging shows, which include strength and fitness displays and to fight the introduction of breed-specific legislation.

A Federal Government ban on the breed's importation began in 1992 and South Australia and New South Wales have restrictions on ownership. The Queensland Government looks set to follow the other states.

"There is a canine holocaust and genocide going on in countries like Germany who have moved to outlaw pit bulls," Mr Muir said. "These dogs have done nothing wrong except for having a particular heritage."