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Aggression a traits in their genes?

Chris Bekker

Let me start by saying that I have owned the breed since 1983.

The APBT is a breed of dog that has lost its pack instinct over the years through human selection - not natural selection as it happens in nature or wild life.

This means that APBT have essentially been bred as catch dogs and mores to fight other dogs (there are exceptions though where the selection criteria have been different) and so cannot operate in a pack of dogs to hunt or in other ways.

I must immediately qualify what I have just said - we get game-bred APBT with a fighting background and also the show variety that has not been fought for decades.

Naturally the "chosen dogs for the showing are conditioned for the show ring and we generally find them competing in show events - in the "show ring" (i.e. specific conformation "beauty" shows) and registered by the UKC and the ADBA in the USA (called the "United Kennel Club" and the "American Dog Breeders Association") and this variety we referred to as mostly non-game bred.

Selection in breeding then focuses on specific traits, abilities and conformation that we want to breed for or accentuate.

Thus we can say that man is the god of dog.

This applies for most working breeds, be it herding dogs, retrieving dogs, hunting dogs, racing dogs, etc.

Because the emphasis is on working ability and the task that is to be performed.

Clearly selection is based on tossing those poor individuals that cannot perform; just like selection is done with race horses where we breed to winners and not losers.

Game bred APBT's are thus dogs that must be chained or kenneled to avoid them getting into a fight with other dogs on the premises or that roam freely.

So let us get to the original question that is being asked.... do APBT's have aggressive traits?

The term that is being used for APBT's that would fight another dog is called "gameness" and not being "aggressive", as most fighting APBT's are not aggressive, but people friendly.

Just like we do not call a lion aggressive when it kills an antelope ... it is in the nature to kill, just like it is in the nature of dogs to retrieve, point, herd, race, hunt or fight.

The word "aggression" is more applicable with regard to human beings.
Example: The APBT dog may be aggressive but he is not game - that means he may show signs of aggression towards human beings (this is a small percentage), but he is not game to fight and will quit fighting in short order.

Gameness means the will to continue to fight even as a loser, and will not give up.

Therefore APBT's generally do not make good guard dogs as they are too people friendly and differ from classical purpose bred guard dogs types such as, Rottweilers, Dobermans, Boerboels and many others used by the Police and Prison departments like German Shepherds.

Most aggressive dogs will exhibit the following traits - growling, the raising of hair, the tail that comes up, sniffing the other dog or a threatening stance.

The APBT does none of this.

The game-bred APBT will fight in short order just like a Race hound would give immediate chase after a rabbit or hare, or a Jackal hound going after a fox.