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Importance of socializing and managing.

It's not only in how they're raised, it is how dogs are managed that matters most.

Informative and various opinions.

All puppies are blank slates - If you do everything right with your APBT puppy, should you'll have a great adult dog?

If dogs have behavioral issues, should we blame the handle end of the leash?

These are common questions we often hear asked as a breeder/trainer.

Behavior is a combination of nature and nurture, and if we could just take a moment to look logically at these myths, we would see just how silly they are.

Genetics do influence behavior.

This is part of the reason we have different breeds.

If you want a dog to work your sheep, you're going to choose a Border collie, not a Brittany spaniel.



What was the Border Collie bred to do? Herding. A job they love and excel in. They enjoy it, it comes naturally, it's in their genes! Some will be better than others, some average, a few probably useless at the task but as a rule this will be what a Border Collie does well and enjoys, genetically wired for the job!

PLEASE LET'S PUT OUR THINKING CAPS ON!! NOT ROCKET SCIENCE!!!



What was the APBT bred to do? Fighting (A long history but not the intention of this post). It was what they were bred and created for. Their job. It's what they do best and it comes naturally, some more than others probably will find the odd ones out but generally they were not made to be dog's/animal's best friend, quite the opposite. They are genetically wired to be animal aggressive!

Even though the two dogs have the same basic size and shape, one is more likely to have the instinctive motor patterns to do the work than the other.

Getting a Border collie whose parents successfully work sheep further increases the likelihood of your dog having the

necessary genetic ability
to be a great shepherd.

In the 1970's, "Murphree" and colleagues began to study the difference between normal and fearful lines of Pointers.

In cross-fostering experiments, puppies from fearful parents (Sire and or Dam) were raised by normal mothers and managed by the breeder/owner.

These puppies still turned out fearful, in spite of proper socialization and a confident role model – genetics.

Interestingly, puppies from normal parents who were raised by fearful mothers also turned out fearful.

Environment also influences behavior, and the best genetics in the world can't create the perfect dog without a supportive upbringing.

If we believe that the way a dog is raised and managed is solely responsible for their adult behavior, how can the tremendous success of re-homing the Pit Bulls from "Michael Vick's" kennel and many other fighting operations be explained?

With their neglectful and abusive upbringing, we would expect those dogs to be vicious and unsalvageable.

Yet many of them have gone on to become wonderful pets.

Some compete in agility or work as certified therapy dogs.

Many Pit Bull enthusiasts are adamant that it's all in how the dogs are raised, yet the success of many former fighting dogs

tells us that it's more than just that.

These amazing, resilient dogs also have to have a sound genetic basis to explain their ability to overcome adversity.

That's what make the real APBT the dog to have.

On the other end of the spectrum, some new owners of "real APBT game dogs" have done everything right, yet continue to struggle

with anxiety or dog aggression issues in their dogs.

Certain lines of Golden Retrievers are known for severe resource guarding issues that often show up even in tiny puppies.

Most German shepherd behavioral consults agree that when these dogs hit 12-18 months will growl at or bite a stranger.

Miniature Australian Shepherds are likely to need behavioral corrective training due to extreme fear issues at 6-10 months of age.

Terrier owners often ask for help when their dog hits social maturity and begins fighting with housemate dogs.

While these traits may be common, trainers, breeders and owner report completely different issues in the same breeds due to different lines (bloodlines) of dogs with different genetic potentials living and being bred in their part of the country.

Then to know "all Pit Bulls were not born equal".

In socializing and on hand training and managing dogs it is also

to find most friendly, stable, solid APBT in beginning obedience and puppy kindergarten classes.

The truth is that dogs are born with a certain genetic potential these will influence which behavioral traits they display.

This could include a dog's sociability towards people, dogs, or other animals; their level of boldness or fearfulness; their likelihood to display anxious, aggressiveness or compulsive behaviors; whether they are calm and confident or nervous and neurotic; and many other behavioral factors.

Looking at one trait to make this clearer.

We know by now that dogs born from fearful parents are more likely to be fearful and that dogs with bold parents are more likely to be bold.

There is a behavioral continuum, with boldness on one end and fearfulness on the other.

Here's what that spectrum would look like.

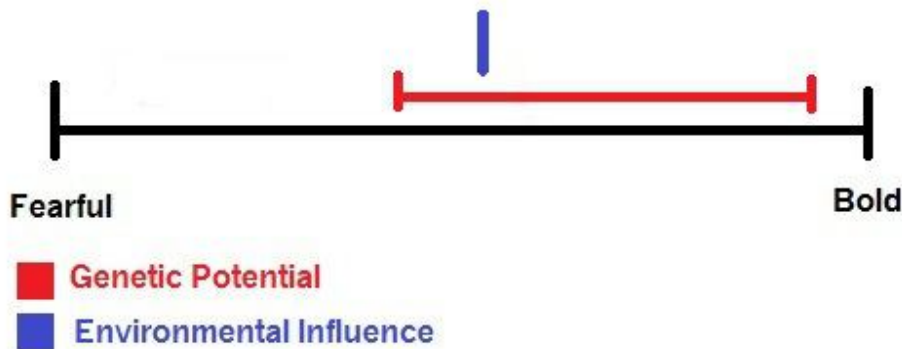
A dog on the left end of the spectrum would be incredibly fearful, while a dog on the right end would be exceedingly confident.

Most dogs wind up somewhere in the middle, and dogs on both ends of the spectrum will present challenges for their owners.



A dog with bold parents is born with the potential to be quite bold.

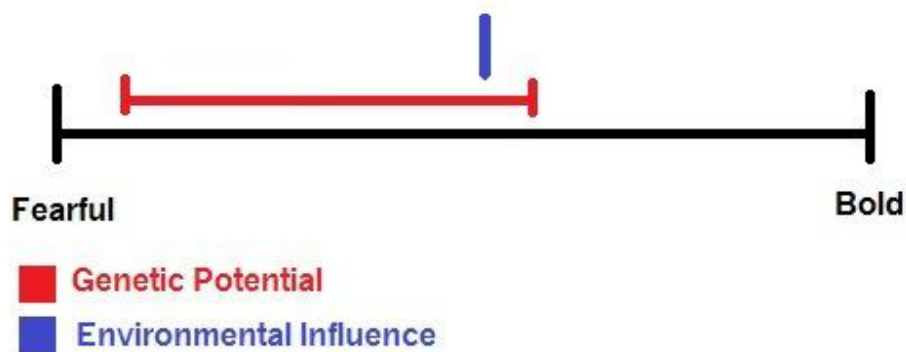
This scenario also applicable to gameness or other traits. They are physically capable of bold behavior. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that they will become a bold dog. If their experiences as a puppy and young adult are very limited or if they has negative, scary experiences, they may develop into a fearful adult due to environmental influence. Their genetic potential gave them the ability to be bold, but their environment did not nurture that ability.



On the other hand, consider a dog who is born from fearful parents.

This dog does not have the genetic potential to be bold. Even given an incredibly supportive and nurturing environment as a puppy and

young adult, this dog will always be somewhat fearful because the physical ability to be bold is just not there.



These dogs may present identically when we look at their behavior, in spite of the very different levels of dedication their owners had to socializing and supporting their puppies.

However, the genetically bold dog may make a lot of progress with appropriate behavioral interventions, while the genetically fearful dog makes little or none.

This has nothing to do with the skill level of each dog's owner, but rather with the raw material each dog started with.

(This is also, by the way, why ethical trainers do not make guarantees: without knowing what genetic package a dog starts

with, there's no way to know how much progress that dog can make until you try.)

Do you see how very unfair and outright false statements about how "it's all in how they're raised" are to committed, wonderful dog owners who have dogs with more difficult baselines?

Just because your dog flew through a behavior mod program doesn't mean every dog can or will, and assuming that it's all because of the owner is unrealistic and downright cruel.

I regularly work with wonderful people who do the best they can with difficult dogs, and that adage about walking a mile in someone's shoes is applicable to their situation.

As if living with and training a more difficult dog weren't enough, these people are often subjected to comments and insinuations that if they were just a better handler, a better trainer, or a better leader, their dog would be perfectly fine - This is untrue.