You can’t always identify a dog’s breed by appearance

Several studies have found that breed labels assigned to dogs of unknown parentage seldom correlate with genetic test results.

- 90% of dogs labeled as a particular breed by 17 different adoption agencies were misidentified. Many shelters now consider it best practice not to guess at breed.
- 2/3 of dogs labeled “pit bulls” in two shelters actually had less than 50 percent pit bull (American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier or American pit bull terrier) DNA.

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Breed doesn’t determine personality

Although many people select breeds hoping for specific personality traits, researchers have discovered as much variation in temperament within breeds as between breeds.

Today’s dog breeds are relatively new

For thousands of years, people bred dogs to perform certain tasks, such as herding, guarding and hunting. These dogs were selected by temperament and skill, and their looks varied.

Most of the 197 dog breeds recognized by the American Kennel Club are less than 200 years old and defined by appearance, not behavior or personality. They are descendants of a small number of ancestors chosen by members of organizations such as the Kennel Club (United Kingdom) and Westminster Kennel Club (U.S.) largely for their uniform physical traits.

Breed, like beauty, is largely fur deep

So much more than inherited genes determine personality and behavior, such as training, socialization, diet, health care and environment.

Don’t be misled by breed myths and stereotypes: The best way to choose a dog is by observing their personality and behavior.

WHY BREED IS ONLY FUR DEEP

BIEWER TERRIER
The AKC recognized four new breeds in 2021.

19,300
Number of genes that make up the entire dog genome.

25%+
of AKC breeds have only been recognized since 2000.

1859
Year the first dog show was held in Newcastle, England, and the origin date for modern dog breeds.

50%+
of the estimated 70-80 million American pet dogs are mixed breeds.

LESS THAN 1% of genes determine a dog’s appearance, and those genes aren’t linked to behavior.

Dogs labeled pit bulls are most often mutts.

“A person looking for a pet is looking for an individual, not a breed.”
—JANIS BRADLEY, NATIONAL CANINE RESEARCH COUNCIL

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“Leave more at humanepro.org/no-more-guessing-games.”

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES