

Looking beyond the breed



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're descendants of a small number of ancestors chosen by kennel clubs largely for their uniform physical traits.

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.

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% pit bull (American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier or American pit bull terrier) DNA.

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.

Learn more at humanepro.org/no-more-guessing-games.

← Dogs labeled pit bulls are most often mutts.

25%+

of AKC breeds have only been recognized since 2000.



50%+

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



19,300

Number of genes that make up the entire dog genome.

Less than 1% of genes

determine a dog's appearance, and those genes aren't linked to behavior.