



Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States

Looking beyond the breed



← Dogs labeled pit bulls
are most often mutts.

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 for 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 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 percent 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.

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 makeup the
entire dog genome.

Less than 1% of genes

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