

Pit Bull Poll

Informal Expo survey reveals 73 percent of respondents believe education is the answer to pit bull problems

At the opening session of this year's Animal Care Expo in Anaheim, California, where the hot topic was pit bulls, conference attendees listened

to the opinions and positions of three animal welfare executives: Wayne Pacelle of The Humane Society of the United States,

Donna Reynolds of BAD RAP (Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pit Bulls), and Ingrid Newkirk of PETA. And in turn, those attendees had a chance to tell The HSUS about their opinions and their organization's experiences with pit bulls.

Before the session, The HSUS distributed a survey called "Pit Bulls

in Your Community," which asked about admission and adoption policies, intake, and the opinions of those polled. The organization received 134 responses.

Not surprisingly, the completed surveys indicated that pit bulls make up a large proportion of dogs entering shelters and rescues. When asked to estimate, the average figure given by attendees was 30 percent (excluding 0 percent and 100 percent answers). Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated that pit bulls make up more than one third of their intake.

Eighty-three percent of respondents' organizations accept most or all breeds. Nineteen percent of those maintain the same adoption procedures for pit bulls as for others, while 76 percent screen pits

and/or their prospective adopters more thoroughly.

In addition to statistics and these "dog-ographics," the survey solicited attendees' opinions on potential solutions. One open-ended question asked, "What do you think is the single biggest problem facing pit bulls today?" Forty-seven percent pointed to abusive or otherwise bad owners, while 43 percent said the pit bull's image and reputation is his main obstacle. Thirty-three percent blamed overpopulation, backyard breeders, and indiscriminate breeding, while 18 percent considered dogfighting to be the culprit.

The survey asked attendees to choose the best solution to the "pit bull problem" from a short list, and the results were: "Public education about dog care and pit bulls" (73 percent), "Crackdown on dogfighting" (45 percent), "Mandatory spay/neuter" (42 percent; some suggested mandatory sterilization of all dogs), and "Ban pit bulls" (1.5 percent). An open-ended "other" option garnered many ideas, including a name change for the breed, an image change, tougher cruelty laws, and stricter breeding regulations. More than half the survey takers said that solving the problem would take more than one approach. (Responses to this and the previous question add up to more than 100 percent because some people gave multiple answers.)

—Katina Antoniadis

To take part in further discussions on the pressing issues facing animal care organizations today, join us at Animal Care Expo 2007, May 9-12, in Dallas, Texas. Visit www.AnimalSheltering.org/expo for details.



INDIA LAWSON

To read more about the pit bull discussion at Animal Care Expo, visit www.AnimalSheltering.org/pitbulldilemma.