

Understanding Different Dog Tolerance Levels

A Normal Trait that is as Flexible as it is Manageable

This page is designed to help demystify the common trait of dog-dog aggression. Dog aggression shows up in numerous breeds, and it's generally "no big deal"...*unless* you deny it, misunderstand it or exploit it. Like so many dog owners, we expect that our dogs have the potential to show some degree of dog aggression in select situations. Our job as responsible stewards is to keep our pets out of those situations by reading their body signals and understanding their individual limits. At the same time, we work to improve the tolerance of each dog through appropriate socializing opportunities. Because dog aggression is not a "one size fits all" trait, outlined below are four very common levels of dog-tolerance that we've come to recognize in our work with the dogs.

Typical Dog Tolerance Levels in a Group of BAD RAP Ambassadors:



1. Dog Social

A dog that truly enjoys the company of other dogs, including housemate dogs. Very easy going; Forgives even the rudest dog manners. Dog-social dogs include most puppies and a percentage of socially mature (14 months and older) pit bulls. Some call these dogs 'cold' pit bulls. **Example:** *Beanie is a mature female who is social and relaxed around all dogs. In contrast, the immature red dog, Penny, in the bottom right of the photo is not as dog-social as when she was a puppy. She's very typical in that she's changing as she matures. A bad accidental fight could shift Penny far away from her dog social beginnings.*



2. Dog Tolerant

Typically non-reactive on leash and either indifferent or friendly to other dogs. Is well socialized and shows relaxed, easy body language in the presence of new dogs. May not 'love' dogs that he doesn't know, but has decent tolerance for rude behavior; a long fuse. Enjoys known dog friends and, in general, succeeds with housemate dogs. **Example:** *Honky Tonk is quite fine with other dogs but doesn't*

seek them out like a puppy might.



3. Dog Selective

Has dog friends but is more selective. May dislike certain 'types' of dogs and/or is easily offended by rude dog manners. Can be described as 'bitchy.' Likes to dictate the rules during dog-play. Can succeed with housemate dogs with supervision.

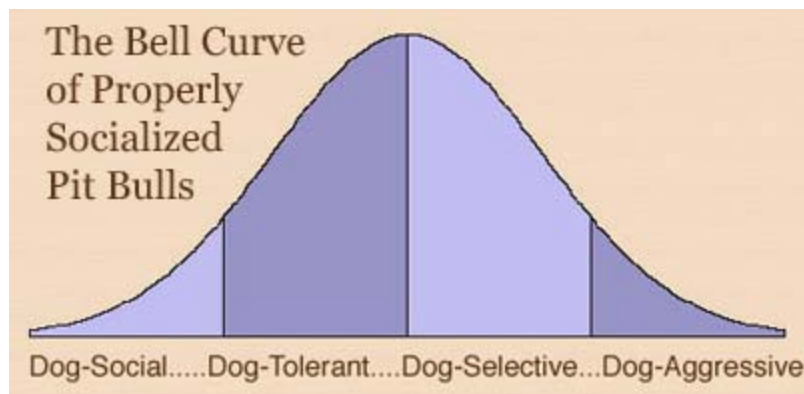
Example: *Sally was Dog Aggressive and willing to fight when she came to us, but with clear direction and supervised socializing opportunities, is not likely to show this trait unless she's pushed passed her limits.*



4. Dog Aggressive

Has a very limited number of dog friends; sometimes, no dog friends. May be opportunistically leash reactive with a weak handler and/or no training. May have a short fuse during play, even with dogs that it knows. Needs heavy supervision during play and a good leader when out on leash. Many live successfully with housemate dogs (usually opposite sex) with proper supervision and safe management protocol. **Example:** *Taz was labeled Dog Aggressive when we first met him because he was very quick to tell dogs off. His tolerance levels have increased dramatically, thanks to lots of socializing opps and good direction from his caretakers. We now call him Dog Selective, although he's still improving and is nearly Dog Tolerant!*

Footnote: All the dogs in this photo were introduced slowly and enjoy each other's company under supervision. While none of the dogs illustrated are 'Dog Aggressive,' like any breed of dog, they may certainly act aggressively towards other dogs if they're mismanaged, provoked or otherwise set up to fail. Pit bulls that we would label as Dog Aggressive can make fantastic pets with the right management (leashes!). BAD RAP places about 2-3 Dog Aggressive pit bulls into new homes each year. In some cases, the Dog Aggressive pit bulls act as our best breed ambassadors at public events. As with all dogs, the key to success is a dog with a correct people-soft temperament and a responsible owner.



The Bell Curve of Dog Aggression:

Dog tolerance levels are flexible and are determined by environmental factors (handler influence, training and socializing efforts) as much as they are determined by genetics. Dog Social dogs can become less social as they come into their maturity,

and Dog Aggressive dogs can become much more tolerant with good direction and proper socialization. In our experience, with the combined factors of maturity, socialization, good leadership and training, most pit bulls fall comfortably in the middle spectrum of this bell curve.