Pit Bulls--Family Pets and Fierce Fighters
TOM GREELEY

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Pit Bulls — Family Pets and Fierce Fighters

In Wrong Hands
They Can Become a Deadly Weapon

By TOM GREELEY.
Times Staff Writer

They are unfailingly loyal.
Gentle and uncommonly patient
with children.
And less likely than a Pekingese
to attack a human, unless provoked.
Trained and cared for properly,
the American Staffordshire terrier,
commonly known as the pit bull,
can be a perfect family pet and
home security system rolled into
one.

But it's a different story when a
pit bull — unwittingly or with devious,
sadistic intentions — is raised
outside what owners of the breed
refer to as the "perfect human
environment."

Strongest Bite
Pit bulls have by far the strongest
bite of any dogs. They exert an esti-
mated 1,200 pounds of pressure per
square inch when they bite (a Ger-
man shepherd ranks second at 800
pounds). So the potential for severe
injury when they attack is great.

In addition, they rarely bark,
often catching their victims off
guard. Because they have been bred
as fighters they are unusually tena-
cious, and in many cases cannot be
deterred except by a shotgun blast.

"It takes a special person to raise
these dogs properly," says Capt. Bill
Viraden of the San Diego Humane
Society. "In the wrong hands, they
are a time bomb waiting to explode.
An animal, or a human, is bound to
get hurt."

Viraden and other animal control
officers agree that more pit bulls are
winding up in the wrong hands as
the breed's popularity grows. If
the pit bull has been bred as a
fighter, the situation becomes even
more lethal.

Bad Reputation
Recent attacks, and publicity
about the centuries-old practice of
gambling on fighting pit bulls have
given the dogs and their owners a
grisly reputation, one that troubles
the legitimate aficionados of the
breed.

Officials here encourage new
laws that would make owners of pit
bulls liable for stiffer penalties if
their dogs attack, and bans on the
breed have been discussed in San
Francisco and in Alameda County.

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Pit bulls, known as fighters, have the strongest bite of any dog—1,200 pounds per square inch.

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